ALEXEY TOLSTOY

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BY

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THE ROAD TO CALVARY

I

"Oh, Russian Land!"
The Word of Igor's Armament.

A stranger from some Moscow side street overhung with lime trees, finding himself in Petersburg, would, in the first moments of observation, have experienced a complex feeling of mental excitement and spiritual oppression.

Wandering through the straight and foggy streets past the solemn, box-like houses with their dark windows and drowsing yard-porters at the gates, gazing long at the watery stretch of the Neva, at the blue line of bridges with their lamps lighted before dusk, at the colonnade of comfortless, joyless palaces, at the piercing height of the non-Russian cathedral of Peter and Paul, at the poor little boats flitting over the dark water and the countless barges with dry wood ranged along the stone embankment, and gazing into the faces of the passers-by, pale and worried, with eyes as murky as a town, the stranger, observing all this, if kindly disposed, would have muffled his head still deeper into his collar; if unkindly disposed, would have felt a desire to strike out with all his might and shatter to fragments this cold, oppressive enchantment.

In the days of Peter I., even, the deacon of Trinity Church, which to this day stands by Trinity Bridge, coming down from the belfry in the dark saw the ghost of a lean peasant woman and was greatly affrighted

thereby. He said in the tavern afterwards, "Petersburg, to be sure, will be empty," for the saying of which he was seized, tortured in the secret chancellery and beaten mercilessly with the knout.

It was thus, no doubt, that it came to be believed that some evil lurked about Petersburg. There were eye-witnesses who claim to have seen the devil riding in a cab in a street of Vasiliev Island, and one midnight during a storm and at high water the Bronze Emperor was said to have wrenched himself from the granite rocks and torn over the stones. And a privy-councillor driving home in his carriage saw glued against the window thereof a corpse, the body of a dead civil-servant. Many such stories were current in the town.

Also quite recently the poet Alexis Alexeyevitch Bezsonov, driving one night over the arched bridge on his way to the island, caught sight of a star in the depths of the heavens through a dispersing cloud. Gazing long at the star with tears in his eyes, he reflected that the cab, the bridge, the thread of lamps and the whole of Petersburg asleep behind him were nothing but an illusion, a spectre of delirium registered on his brain, befogged with wine, love and boredom.

And it was as in a delirium, and in a hurry that Petersburg was built. As a dream two centuries passed. Strange to all things living the city stood at the end of the earth in swamps and weeds, raving about universal glory and power. As spectres in delirium court revolutions flashed by, assassinations of emperors, triumphs and bloody executions. Frail women assumed semi-divine power; out of warm, crumpled beds the fate of peoples was resolved; strong fellows came, of powerful build and hands black with soil, and boldly they walked up to the throne to share the power, bed and the Byzantine luxury.

The surrounding country gazed in horror at this frenzied outburst of fantasy. In fear and dejection the Russian people looked on at the ravings of the capital. The country drank and could never drink its fill of its own blood and the spirit of the Petersburg phantoms.

Petersburg lived a midnight life, turbulently cold and satiated. Phosphorescent summer nights, mad and sensual, sleepless winter nights with green tables and clink of gold, music, whirling couples behind windows, furious troikas, gipsies, duels, and at daybreak a shrill icy wind, the piercing blast of a bugle, a parade of troops before the petrifying gaze of the Emperor's protruding eyes. Thus the city lived.

In the last few dozen years huge undertakings sprang up with amazing rapidity. Millions' worth of property rose as out of air. From crystal and cement, banks were built and music-halls, skating-rinks, gorgeous drinking-houses with deafening music, reflecting mirrors, half-naked women, light and champagne. Gambling clubs were quickly opened, meeting-houses, theatres, cinematographs, moonlight gardens with American attractions. Engineers and capitalists were engaged on a plan of a new city of unparalleled luxury, to be built on a desert island not far from Petersburg.

In the city an epidemic of suicide was rife. The law courts were filled with crowds of hysterical women greedily listening to the bloody details of the sensational cases. All was attainable—luxury and women. Depravity permeated everything; like a contagion, it spread to the court.

And to the court, to the very throne of the most unfortunate of emperors, came an illiterate peasant with wild eyes and great masculine strength, and in derision and scorn he began to defame Russia.

THE ROAD TO CALVARY

Petersburg, like every other town, lived its own life, strained and worried. A central force guided its motion, but this force had nothing in common with what might have been called the spirit of the town. The force tried to create order, calmness and fitness, the spirit of the town tried to destroy the force. The spirit of destruction was in everything; like a putrid poison it permeated the extensive Bourse machinations of the famous Sashka Sakelman, the dull rancour of the workman at the steel foundry, the disjointed fancies of the popular poetess sitting at five in the morning in the artistic basement of "The Red Bells"; it permeated those who should have fought against it, but, not understanding, did all to sharpen and strengthen it.

It was a time when love, and good wholesome feeling, were held to be commonplace and out of date. No one loved, all thirsted; and as though poisoned, they seized on any acrid thing that would tear their vitals.

Girls concealed their innocence, the married their faithfulness. Destruction was held to be good taste, neurasthenia a sign of refinement. This was taught by the new writers who sprang to fame in a season out of nothing. People feigned sins and vices they possessed not for fear of being thought dull.

To breathe the air of the grave, to feel near one the trembling body of a woman consumed with a devilish curiosity, this was the pathos of the poetry of the last years—death and sensuality.

Such was Petersburg in the year 1914. Worn out with sleepless nights, drowning its despair in wine, gold, loveless love, in the insistent strains of the tango—the death hymn—it lived as if in expectancy of the terrible and fatal day. There were those who predicted it. The new and incomprehensible crept in through every crevice.

II

"We don't want to remember anything. We say, Enough, turn your back on the past! What is there in the past for me? Milo's Venus? What use is she to me? You can't eat her! She doesn't even make the hair grow! What do I want with the stone carcass? But you must have art! art! You like to tickle your heels with the word. Look to the side of you! look before you! look under your feet! Aren't those American boots you have on? Three cheers for American boots! A red motor-car, rubber tires, a pool of petrol, a hundred miles an hour, there you have art! It makes you want to devour space. Or a poster ten yards long with a young man on it in a top-hat as brilliant as the sun, that's art! It's your tailor who's your artist, your present-day genius! I want to devour life and you offer me some sweetened water, good for the sexually impotent. . . ."

A burst of laughter and applause came from the back of the narrow hall, where a crowd of undergraduates from the universities were gathered behind the chairs. The speaker, Peter Petrovitch Sapojkov, smiled with his moist mouth. He steadied the wobbling glasses on his big nose and quickly walked down the steps of the wooden rostrum.

To one side of it, at a long table lighted by two five-candled sconces, sat the members of the Philosophical Evenings Society. There was the President, Antinovsky, a professor of theology, and the lecturer of the evening, the historian Veliaminov; the philosopher Borsky, who

had been expelled from the Theological Academy for leanings toward socialism and had in turn abandoned the socialists and been reviled by them; there was the crafty writer, Sakunin, author of some cynical and remarkable books.

The Philosophical Evenings Society had this winter sustained an onslaught from pugnacious youngsters whom no one knew. They attacked venerable writers and esteemed philosophers with such audacity and said such impudently smart things that the detached old house on the Fontanka, where the meetings were held, was packed on Saturdays, the days of public meetings.

It was packed this evening. When Sapojkov disappeared in the crowd amidst spasmodic hand-clapping, there got up on the platform a little man with a knobby shaven head, a young face, yellow skin and high cheekbones. His name was Akundin. He had made his appearance there quite recently, and his success, especially among the audience at the back of the hall, was enormous. When one asked who he was and where he came from, sensible people smiled mysteriously. His name was not Akundin, in any case. He had come from abroad; it was for no idle purpose that he had appeared there.

Akundin stroked his thin beard, looked round at the silenced audience, smiled and began to speak.

In the third row by the middle gangway, her chin supported on her closed hand, sat a young girl, in a black cloth dress cut high at the neck. Her fine, ash-coloured hair, drawn over the ears and rolled in a large knot, was caught with a comb. Without a movement or a smile she gazed at the men sitting at the green table; sometimes her eyes became fixed on the candles.

When Akundin, with a bang of his dry fist on the wooden rostrum, cried out, "World economics will strike

the first blow of the iron fist on the dome of the Church! The fight against the Church is purely a question of economics!" the girl sighed slightly and, taking her hand from her reddened chin, she put a caramel in her mouth.

Akundin went on.

"And you are still dreaming your muddled dreams of the Kingdom of God on earth! Here you are snoring and seeing visions and mumbling Messiahism in your sleep. Yet for all your efforts the people are still asleep. Or do you hope they'll wake up and speak like Balaam's ass? They'll wake up, to be sure, but it won't be the sweet voices of your poets that'll wake them, nor the smoke of your incense. It will be the factory whistle that'll wake them! The people will wake and speak, not of Messiahism, but of justice, and their voices will grate on your ears. Or do you still put faith in your rubbish and your bogs? You could go on sleeping here for another half a century, I believe, but don't call it Messiahism. It is not coming; it is passing like a shadow over the earth! It was here in Petersburg, in this beautiful hall, that the Russian peasant was invented. Hundreds of books have been written about him, operas have been composed about him. It is like a game of shadows on a wall. I only fear that the game will end in bloodshed. . . ."

At this point the President interposed. Akundin gave a faint smile. He took a large dirty pocket-handkerchief and with an habitual gesture, wiped his head and forehead. From the back of the hall voices called out.

"Let him speak!"

"A shame to stop him!"

"It's disgraceful!"

"Shut up, you there!"

"Shut up yourself!"

Akundin went on.

"The Russian peasant is a peg on which to hang ideas. But if these ideas are organically opposed to his instincts, to his age-long desires, to his primitive idea of justice, his understanding of humanity, your ideas will fall as a seed on a stone. Until the peasant is regarded as a man with an empty stomach, with a spine bent with toil, until you get rid of those Messianic qualities invented for him by some gentleman or other, until then will you have two tragically opposite poles—your excellent theories, born in dim studies, and a greedy, half bestial life. We are not really criticizing you. It would be a waste of time to examine all your mass of human fantasy. No. We say to you, turn your ideas into reality! Don't sit and philosophize! Experiment! Let your experiments be desperate, but you'll prove the value of your ideas; you'll know how to live. . . ."

The girl in the black cloth dress did not think it worth while to reflect on the speaker's words. Their arguments were, no doubt, impressive, but the important fact about them all was—well, for instance—and she was quite convinced of this—Akundin loved no one on earth but himself and would have felt no compunction in shooting a man if it were necessary to prove his theories.

While she was thinking this another man approached the green table. He sat slowly down near the President, nodded to right and to left, passed his reddened hand over his fair hair, wet from the snow, wiped his fingers on his pocket-handkerchief, put his hands beneath the table and pulled himself up in his narrow black jacket. He had a swarthy face, arched eyebrows, large grey eyes and hair falling over his forehead like a skull-cap. It was Alexis Alexeyevitch Bezsonov, just as he was pictured in the current number of a weekly journal.

The girl could see nothing now but his almost repulsively handsome face. In a kind of terror she regarded the strange features of which she had dreamt so often in the stormy Petersburg nights.

There he was bending to his neighbor's ear; he smiled and his smile was simple, but in the line of his nostrils, in the somewhat feminine brows, in some quiet force in his face there was treachery, conceit, and something else which she could not understand, but which excited her more than the rest.

At this moment the lecturer, Veliaminov, red-faced and bearded, with gold spectacles and tufty golden-grey hair around his large head, rose to answer Akundin.

"You are as right as the avalanche crashing down the mountains. We have long been expecting the advent of your terrible age and prophesied the triumph of your truth. It is you who control the elements, not we. We do not prop up your avalanche with our shoulders. We know that when it has rolled to the bottom, to the earth, its strength will be broken, and your higher truth, for the conquest of which you shriek with your factory hooters, will be a mass of broken fragments—chaos—amidst which man will wander stunned. Take care," Veliaminov raised a finger as long as a pencil and looked severely through his spectacles at the audience. "In the paradise of which you dream, in the name of which you want to convert a living man into a syllogism, dressed in a hat and coat and with a rifle over his shoulder, in your terrible paradise a new revolution is preparing, more terrible perhaps than any revolution—the revolution of the Spirit——"

Akundin interjected coldly from his place:

"That has been foreseen."

Veliaminov stretched out his hands across the table.

The candles threw a light on the bald patch on his head. He spoke of the sin into which the world had fallen and of the future terrible reckoning. In the hall people began to cough.

During the interval the girl went into the refreshment-room and stood by the door, frowning and apart. Several advocates and their wives were drinking tea and talking more loudly than most people. By the stove stood Chernobilin, the famous writer, eating fish and bilberries and glancing now and then with resentful and drunken eyes at the new-comers. Two middle-aged literary women with broad ribbons round their hair were munching sandwiches by the counter. Several priests stood staidly aside, not mixing with the laymen. Under the chandelier, his hands behind the tails of his long coat and balancing himself on his heels, was a greyish man with matted hair. This was Chirva, the critic, waiting for some one to come and talk to him. Veliaminov appeared. One of the literary women rushed up to him and grabbed his sleeve, which he carefully tried to extricate during their conversation. The other literary woman also stopped munching and shook off the crumbs; she bent her head and opened her eyes wide. Bezsonov came up to her, bowing to right and to left with a humble inclination of the head.

The girl in black felt in her bones how the literary woman straightened herself in her corsets and assumed an affected air. Bezsonov said something to her with an indolent smile. She clapped her hands and laughed, rolling her eyes.

"Horrible, dirty creature," thought the girl and went out of the refreshment-room. Some one called to her. Pushing his way through the crowd was a dark, tired-looking youth in a velveteen jacket; he nodded joyfully, screw-

ing up his nose with pleasure. He took her hand. His palm was clammy, on his forehead was a clammy tuft of hair and his oval watery eyes gazed at her with a watery tenderness. It was Alexander Ivanovitch Jirov.

"Well, now, what are you doing here, Dasha Dmitrievna?" he said.

"Just what you are doing," she replied, withdrawing her hand, which she put into her muff and wiped on her pocket-handkerchief.

He laughed, and looking at her still more tenderly, said:

"How did you like Sapojkov tonight? He spoke like a prophet. His severity of expression is irritating, but his ideas . . . At bottom, aren't they what we all want? Only we're afraid to say so, he isn't. Have you seen his latest verse?

> Young, young, young are we all
> With devilishly hungry stomachs.
> Let us swallow the void. . . .

Very strong and original. Don't you feel, Daria Dmitrievna, that the new, the new is coming with a rush? It's our very own, bold, greedy! There's Akundin, now. There may be too much logic about him, but he hits the nail on the head every time. Another two or three winters like this and the whole thing will crumble; it'll burst at the seams. Won't that be good!" He spoke quietly, with a soft smile. Dasha felt him trembling all over as with some horrible excitement. She did not stop to listen, but nodded to him and pushed her way to the cloakroom.

The morose, medal-bedecked porter, who was dragging a bundle of coats and galoshes, paid no heed to Dasha's proffered ticket. She had to wait long in the draught of the swinging door, where without, in the deserted vestibule, tall peasant-cabmen, in their wet blue coats, were

gaily and impudently offering their services to the people coming out.

"I've a fast horse, Your 'Cellency!"

"It's on your way, on the Peski!"

Suddenly behind her Bezsonov's voice was heard in a cold staccato: "Porter, my coat, hat and stick."

Dasha had a sensation of pins and needles running down her back. She turned her head quickly and looked straight into Bezsonov's eyes. He met her gaze calmly and indifferently, then his eyelids quivered; his grey eyes lighted up, yielding, and Dasha felt her heart beat fast.

"If I am not mistaken," he said, "we have met at your sister's."

"We have," Dasha replied boldly.

She snatched her coat from the porter and hastened to the door. In the street a damp cold wind caught her dress, dashing the stinging drops against her. Dasha muffled herself to her eyes in her fur collar. Some one catching up with her whispered near her ear: "What eyes! my pretty!"

Dasha walked quickly over the wet asphalt, along the purple quivering lines of electric light. From the swinging doors of a restaurant a sound of violins was heard playing a waltz. And Dasha, without turning round, hummed into her shaggy fur muff, "It's not so easy, easy, easy!"

III

Unfastening her coat in the hall, Dasha asked the maid, "Is no one at home?"

The Great Mogul—it was thus the maid Lusha was nicknamed, for her bepowdered face with the high cheek-bones was very like the face of an idol—took a peep at the looking-glass, and in a thin voice replied that the mistress was not at home, but that the master was at home, and in his study, and that supper would be served in half an hour.

Dasha went into the drawing-room, where she sat down by the piano, crossed her legs and embraced her knees.

Her brother-in-law, Nikolai Ivanovitch, was at home, which meant that he had quarrelled with his wife; he would be feeling injured and would complain. It was only eleven now and there was nothing to do until three when she would fall asleep. Should she read? But what? Besides, she did not want to. Think? But that, if anything, would be worse for her. How comfortless life was at times!

Dasha sighed. She opened the piano and sitting sideways at it, began to play something of Scriabin's with one hand. It was hard for any one at the awkward age of nineteen, especially for a girl, and not a stupid girl, by any means, and one who, moreover, from some absurd sense of purity was so very severe with all—and these were not few—who expressed a desire to dispel a maiden's melancholy.

The year before Dasha had come from Samara to

Petersburg for a course in law and had settled with her elder sister Ekaterina Dmitrievna Smokovnikov. Her husband was a well-known advocate and they lived boisterously and in grand style.

Dasha was five years younger than her sister. When Ekaterina Dmitrievna married Dasha was still a child. For the last few years the sisters had seen little of each other and now a new relationship had sprung up between them, an attitude of adoration on the part of Dasha and gentle affection on the part of Ekaterina Dmitrievna.

At first Dasha imitated her sister in everything, admired her beauty, her taste, her manner with people. She was shy of her sister's friends and in her nervousness said rude things to some. Ekaterina Dmitrievna tried to make her house a model of taste and modernity, of the kind that had not yet become popular. She did not miss a single exhibition and bought futurist pictures. On this account, during the last year, there had been stormy scenes with her husband, who liked paintings of the idealistic kind, while Ekaterina Dmitrievna, with all her feminine enthusiasm, resolved to suffer for the new art rather than be thought old-fashioned.

Dasha, too, admired these strange pictures which had been hung about the drawing-room, though she thought sometimes in sorrow that the square figures with their geometrical faces and superfluous quantity of arms and legs, and the thickly laid on paint which was like a headache—in fact the whole of the manufacturing, cast-iron, cynical poetry which had risen against the Lord God, was rather beyond her dull imagination.

Every Tuesday in the Smokovnikovs' dining-room, a gay and noisy company was gathered to supper. There were talkative advocates, admirers of the opposite sex, and two or three journalists who carefully followed the

new literary tendencies and knew well what attitude to adopt in home and foreign politics; there was the highly strung critic Chirva, who was working on one of his usual literary catastrophes. Sometimes, very early, young poets came, leaving manuscripts of their verses in the hall, in their coat pockets. Just before supper some celebrity would appear in the drawing-room, would walk slowly up to the hostess, bend over her hand and sit down with dignity in an armchair. Half way through supper one would hear some one in the hall noisily taking off his leather galoshes and a velvety voice would say "I greet you, O Great Mogul!" and then over the hostess's chair would bend the clean-shaven face of the resigned stage-lover.

"Katusha," he would say every time, "from today I've sworn not to drink any more. Really I have."

For Dasha the most important person at these suppers was her sister. Dasha was angry with those who were not sufficiently attentive to the dear, kind, simple-hearted Ekaterina Dmitrievna and was jealous of those who were too attentive, casting angry glances at the culprits.

By degrees she grew accustomed to the crowds, so confusing to the inexperienced. Advocates' assistants she now despised; besides their rough morning-coats, lilac neckties and partings in the middle of the hair, there was nothing else in them. The resigned stage-lover she hated. He had no right to call her sister Katie, or the Great Mogul, Great Mogul, nor had he any right whatever, when he finished a glass of vodka, to wink a protruding eye at Dasha and to say "I drink to the blossoming almond!"

Every time this happened Dasha choked with rage.

Her cheeks were certainly rosy and do what she would she could not get rid of the almond-blossom

color. But at table Dasha's face felt as red as a beetroot.

In the summer Dasha did not go to her father's in hot, dusty Samara, but gladly agreed to stay by the sea with her sister in Sestroretska. The same people were there that one saw in the winter, only one met them more often, went boating with them, ate ices in the pine woods, listened to music in the evenings and supped noisily on the verandas of the boarding-houses beneath the stars.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna ordered Dasha a white embroidered dress, a pink gauze hat, trimmed with a black ribbon, and a broad silk sash to be tied in a large bow at the back, and suddenly, as though his eyes were only just opened, Kulichok, her brother-in-law's assistant, fell in love with Dasha.

But he belonged to the "despised." Dasha was furious. She took him for a walk in the woods and without giving him an opportunity to say a word in self-defence (he was merely able to wipe his brow with his pocket-handkerchief, rolled into a ball) she told him that she was not a bourgeois and would not allow herself to be regarded as a "female," that she was annoyed and insulted, and considered him disgusting, and that she would that very day complain to her brother-in-law.

And complain to her brother-in-law she did that very evening. Nikolai Ivanovitch let her finish to the end while he stroked his thin beard and gazed in wonder at Dasha's almond-blossom cheeks, grown a deeper shade with indignation, at her furiously agitated hat, at the whole of Dasha's slim white figure; then he sat down on the sand by the water and began to laugh. He pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes, saying, "Go away, Daria, go away, or I'll die!"

Dasha went, comprehending nothing, confused and disturbed. Kulichok now dared not look at her; he grew

thin and retired. Dasha's honour was saved. But the whole incident unexpectedly aroused in her dormant feelings. Broken was that subtle calmness; it seemed as though into the whole of Dasha's body, from her head to her heels, there had entered another being, suffocating, illusive, formless and disgusting. Dasha felt this being in her very bones; she was tormented by it as by something unclean: she wanted to wash off this invisible web, to be again fresh, cool and light-hearted.

She now played tennis for hours at a time, bathed twice a day, rose early in the morning, when large dewdrops were still shining on the leaves and vapour rose from the purple sea, as smooth as a mirror, and the wet tables were being placed on the deserted veranda, and the wet gravel paths were being swept.

But, when heated by the sun, or at night in her soft bed the other being revived from all these repressions; carefully it found its way to her heart and squeezed it with its warm paw.

It could not be shaken off, nor, like the blood from Blue Beard's key, could it be washed off.

All their friends, and most of all her sister, found that Dasha had improved this summer, in fact that she was growing prettier every day.

One day Ekaterina Dmitrievna, going into her sister's room, said, "What's going to happen to us next?"

"What do you mean, Katia?"

Dasha, in her chemise, was sitting on the bed, twisting her ash-coloured hair into a large knot.

"You're getting too pretty. It's quite frightening to think what you'll do next."

Dasha with her severe "thick-dashed" eyes looked at her sister and turned away. Her cheeks and ears went a bright red.

"Katia, I wish you wouldn't talk like that; I don't like it."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna sat down on the bed, put her cheek against Dasha's bare back and, laughing, kissed her between the shoulder blades.

"What a horned monster we are; not like a frog or a hedgehog or a wildcat."

And her sister began to laugh just as Nikolai Ivanovitch had done. They did not care to understand what had happened to Dasha, or it seemed to them just as it should be and quite natural.

One day an Englishman appeared on the crowded tennis-court. He was thin, clean-shaven, had a protruding chin and childlike eyes. He was so immaculately dressed that certain of Ekaterina Dmitrievna's younger followers grew quite depressed. He asked Dasha for a game and played like a machine. It seemed to Dasha the whole time they were playing that he did not look at her once, but stared past her. She lost and suggested another game. For greater freedom she rolled up the sleeves of her white blouse. A lock of hair came down from beneath her piqué cap; she did not stop to tidy it. Returning the ball with a strong drive by the net he thought:

"Here is a clever Russian girl with an inexplicable grace in her every movement and a flush on her cheek."

The Englishman won this time, too. He bowed to Dasha and putting on his blazer—he was quite unfeeling—lighted a fragrant cigarette, and sitting down near by, asked for a glass of lemonade.

Playing a third set with a distinguished schoolboy. He was sitting at the little table, nursing his foot, in a silk sock; his hat was pushed to the back of his head, and without moving, he was gazing at the sea.

At night, lying in bed, Dasha recalled all this. She could see herself rushing about the lawn with flushed face and hair coming down and she cried for very shame, from a feeling of self-pity and from some other cause that was stronger than herself.

From that day Dasha left off playing tennis. Once her sister said to her, "Dasha, Mr. Bales asks after you every day. Why don't you play now?"

Dasha opened her mouth wide—she was so startled. Then she said angrily that she had no wish to listen to "idle gossip," that she did not know a Mr. Bales and had no wish to know him, and that, anyhow, it was just like his impudence to think that she did not play at "the stupid game" because of him. Dasha refused to have any dinner. She took some bread and gooseberries and went into the woods, and there, amidst the sweet-smelling, warm resinous pines, wandering among the tall red trunks with their rustling tops, she decided that it was useless any longer to hide the truth; she was in love with the Englishman, was miserable and did not want to live.

Thus, raising its head little by little, this second being grew up in Dasha. The presence was revolting at first; it was like something unclean, unwholesome, or like decay. Then she grew accustomed to the dual position as, when the summer had gone by, she would get used to cold winds, cold water, tightening herself in her corsets and to putting on a cloth dress.

Her "monstrous" love for the Englishman lasted for two weeks. Dasha hated herself and was furious with the man. On several occasions she saw him playing tennis, lazily but well; at other times she saw him running races on the sands, or supping with Russian sailors, and in her despair she thought that he was the most fascinating man in the world.

And then she saw him about with a tall thin girl dressed in white flannel. She was English and his fiancée —and then they went away. Dasha did not sleep the whole of that night. She loathed and hated herself and by morning resolved that this would be the last mistake she would make in her life.

With this she grew calmer and then wondered how quickly and easily the whole incident had passed. But not everything had passed. Dasha felt how the second being seemed to be merged in her, dissolved in her—to disappear. She had grown different—fresh and light-hearted as of old, but more tender and gentle and incomprehensible; her skin even seemed to be finer; she scarcely knew her face in the glass; her eyes in particular were different—those wonderful eyes; if you looked into them, your head began to swim.

In the middle of August the Smokovnikovs and Dasha returned to Petersburg to their large flat on the Znamenska. Again there were the Tuesday at-homes, picture exhibitions, stormy first nights in the theatres, sensational law cases, buying of pictures, hunting for antiques, night excursions to the gipsies in Samarkand. Again there appeared the resigned stage-lover, who had lost twenty-three pounds in weight during his mineral-water treatment, and, added to all these thrilling pleasures, there were vague, disturbing and joyous rumours that some change was in preparation.

Dasha now had little time to think or to feel. In the morning there were lectures; in the afternoon shopping with her sister and in the evening theatres, suppers, people—not a moment to be alone.

On one of the Tuesday at-homes, after supper, when they were all drinking liqueurs, Alexis Alexeyevitch Bezsonov came into the drawing-room. Catching sight of

him in the doorway, Ekaterina Dmitrievna flushed a deep red. General conversation ceased. Bezsonov sat down on the couch and Ekaterina Dmitrievna handed him a cup of coffee.

He was joined by two connoisseurs of literature—two advocates—but with a strange long glance at the hostess, Bezsonov unexpectedly announced that in general there was no art, that all we had was charlatanism, the fakir's trick of making a monkey climb to heaven up a rope.

"The trick in itself is harmless; in art it is subtle, devilish deception. You've come to hear poetry. What does that mean, now? Some family man of thirty-five will suddenly get up and pretend that there is something in him that others haven't got—something not human—and he'll tell you in rhyme how he wants to corrupt a girl and you'll think it very exalted. I hate it. There's no poetry in it. Everything has long been dead, art as well as people. Russia has fallen and a flock of crows are feasting on her body. All who write poetry will go to hell."

He spoke quietly, in a deep voice. Two bright red spots appeared on his pale, sullen face. His soft collar was crumpled; his coat was covered with ash; the coffee in the cup he was holding was trickling on to the carpet.

The literary connoisseurs were ready to argue, but Bezsonov paid no attention to them; with bedimmed eyes he was watching Ekaterina Dmitrievna. He rose and went over to her, and Dasha heard him say, "I can't stand people. Can I go?"

Timidly she asked him to read something. He shook his head and in taking leave, held her hand so long that Ekaterina Dmitrievna went red all over.

When he had gone a discussion arose. The men all agreed that "there are limits," and "you can't so openly

despise our society." Chirva, the critic, went from one to another saying that "he was dead drunk." The ladies concluded that "whether Bezsonov was drunk or merely in one of his moods, was no matter; he was a most exciting person and they would have them all know it."

At dinner the next day, Dasha announced that Bezsonov seemed to her one of those rare "real" personalities, whose experiences, passions, sins, tastes, as a reflection of light, were reflected in the lives of all the people surrounding Ekaterina Dmitrievna, who live by them alone. "I can understand, Katia, how you can lose your head over such a man."

Nikolai Ivanovitch objected. "You are influenced, Dasha, by the fact of his being a celebrity." Ekaterina Dmitrievna was silent. Bezsonov did not come again to the Smokovnikovs. There was a rumour that he was frequently behind the scenes with the actress, Charodeieva. Kulichok and his friends went to see this actress and were disappointed. She was as thin as a bone; nothing of her but lace petticoats.

One day Dasha met Bezsonov at an exhibition. He was standing by the window indifferently turning over the leaves of the catalogue and in front of him, as though standing before a wax image, were two sturdy girl students gazing at him with petrified smiles. Dasha walked past quickly and in the next room she sat down on a chair. Her legs suddenly gave way beneath her and she felt miserable without knowing why.

After this she bought Bezsonov's photograph and put it on her table. His poems—there were three little white volumes—at first had the effect of poison on her. She went about for days distraught, as though she had become a participant in some evil, mysterious rite. But rereading them again and again she began to enjoy the

unwholesome feverish sensations; some one seemed to whisper to her to forget, to slacken, to trample on some precious thing, to long for something which never was.

It was on account of Bezsonov that she took to going to the meetings of the Philosophical Evenings Society. He used to come late and rarely spoke, but each time, Dasha returned home in a state of excitement and was glad if she found visitors there. Her pride was quiescent.

Tonight she had to play Scriabin in solitude. Like little balls of ice the notes fall on the heart, in the depths of a bottomless lake; falling they disturb the water and sink, and the water flows in and recedes, and in the burning darkness, the heart beats loudly and fast, and it seems that soon, now, this very moment, some impossible thing must happen.

Dasha let her hands fall on her knees and raised her head. In the soft light cast by the orange lamp-shade there stared at her from the walls purple, swollen, grinning faces with bulging eyes, looking like the ghosts of protoplasmic chaos greedily stuck in the garden of the Lord God on the first day of creation.

"Yes, my dear ladies, things are bad with us," Dasha said. Then she played a scale, quietly shut the lid of the piano; from a little Japanese box standing on a small table by a couch, she took a cigarette, which she lighted, but it made her cough, so she crumpled it up on the ash-tray.

"Nikolai Ivanovitch, what time is it?" Dasha called, loudly enough to be heard through four rooms. Something fell over in the study, but there was no reply. The Great Mogul appeared and taking a peep in the looking-glass, announced that supper was ready.

At the table she sat near a vase of fading flowers;

she pulled them to pieces and put the petals on the tablecloth. The Mogul served tea, cold meat and an omelette. Nikolai Ivanovitch appeared at last. He wore a new suit of blue clothes, but no collar. His hair was unkempt and on his beard, which was crushed on one side, there hung a piece of fluff from the sofa cushions.

Nikolai Ivanovitch nodded sullenly to Dasha, sat down at the end of the table, pulled the omelette dish over to himself and began to eat greedily.

Having finished, he leaned his elbow on the edge of the table, rested his cheek on his large, hairy fist, and fixing his eyes vacantly on the heap of torn petals, he said in a low, almost unnatural voice:

"Last night your sister was unfaithful to me."

IV

Her own sister, Katia, had committed some incomprehensible, dark, terrible deed. Last night her head had lain on the pillow, averted from all things living dear and affectionate, and now her body was crushed and hidden. Shuddering, this is how she visualized what Nikolai Ivanovitch had called unfaithfulness. And added to all, Katia was not at home, as though she no longer existed on earth.

For the first few moments Dasha was stunned and her eyes grew dim. Without a movement she sat expecting to hear Nikolai Ivanovitch burst out screaming or sobbing. But he did not add a word after his announcement; he kept toying with a fork-rest lying on the table. Dasha dared not look him in the face.

After a long silence, he moved his chair back with a clatter and went into his study. "He'll shoot himself," Dasha thought. But this, too, did not happen. In a momentary feeling of acute pity she recalled how his large, hairy arm rested on the table, but then he faded from her vision and Dasha kept on repeating to herself: "What is to be done? What is to be done?" There was a ringing sound in her brain; everything, everything was shattered and mutilated.

From behind the heavy curtains the Great Mogul appeared with a tray. Dasha looked into her powdered face and suddenly realized that there was no Great Mogul now, nor would there ever be. Tears came into her eyes. She clenched her teeth and rushed into the drawing-room.

There, every little thing had been placed and every picture had been hung by Katia's loving hand. But Katia's soul had gone out of the room and everything in it was barren and desolate. Dasha sat down on the sofa. By degrees her gaze grew fixed on a recently acquired picture, which was hanging on the wall above the piano. For the first time she saw and understood its meaning.

It represented a naked woman, of a blear-red colour, like raw skin. The mouth was on one side; instead of a nose there was a triangular hole; the head was square with a piece of real stuff stuck on it; the legs and knees were in jointed sections; in the hand she held a flower. The other details were horrible. Most horrible of all was the corner in which she sat, bow-legged—a dull, brown-coloured spot—such spots, no doubt, as there are in hell. The picture was called "Love," but Katia used to call it "The Modern Venus."

"I see now why Katia was so delighted with the abandoned woman. She is like that herself now, with a flower in some corner." Dasha lay face downwards on the cushion, digging her teeth into it to prevent herself from screaming. She burst into tears. After a time, Nikolai Ivanovitch came into the room. He stood with his legs apart, snapped his cigarette-lighter viciously and blew out a cloud of smoke. Then he walked over to the piano and began to strum on it with one finger, unexpectedly strumming out the tune of "Chaffinch." He banged down the lid of the piano and said, "It was to be expected."

Dasha repeated the words to herself several times to comprehend their meaning. A loud ring was heard in the hall. Nikolai Ivanovitch raised his hand to stroke his beard, but with a smothered exclamation of "O-o-o!" he dropped it and walked quickly out of the

room into his study. Along the passage came the sound of the Great Mogul's footsteps, like horse-hoofs, Dasha sprang up from the sofa with bedimmed eyes and fast-beating heart and rushed out into the hall.

There stood Ekaterina Dmitrievna with her nose screwed up, clumsily trying to untie the mauve bow of her hood with reddened, cold fingers. She offered her cheek to Dasha, but receiving no kiss, she threw off her hood with a shake of the head and with her grey eyes looked intently at her sister.

"Has anything happened here? Have you quarrelled?" she asked in a deep, low voice, always so charmingly sweet.

Dasha's gaze was fixed on Nikolai Ivanovitch's leather galoshes, about which they used to say at home that they walked of themselves; they now stood like a couple of orphans. Dasha's chin quivered.

"It's nothing. Nothing has happened."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna slowly unfastened the large buttons of her squirrel coat, which she threw off, revealing her bare shoulders. She looked so warm and soft and tired. Bending down to undo her gaiters, she said: "We couldn't find a motor at first and I got my feet wet!"

Dasha, still staring at Nikolai Ivanovitch's galoshes, asked coldly, "Where have you been, Katia?"

"At some literary supper, my dear, but I don't know in whose honour it was given, upon my word. The usual thing. And I'm dead tired and sleepy."

She went into the dining-room, where she threw her leather handbag on to the table and, wiping her nose, asked, "Who's been tearing the flowers? And where's Nikolai Ivanovitch?"

Dasha was nonplussed. No matter from what angle she regarded her sister, she did not seem a whit like the

abandoned woman in the picture. She did not seem strange to her; on the contrary, she was so particularly dear and sweet tonight that she wanted to caress her all over. But gathering all her courage and digging her nails into the tablecloth at the exact spot where Nikolai Ivanovitch had eaten his omelette, she said:

"Katia!"

"What is it, my dear?"

"I know everything."

"What do you know? What has happened, in God's name?"

Ekaterina Dmitrievna sat down by the table, her knees touching Dasha's legs, and looked her curiously up and down.

"Nikolai Ivanovitch has told me all."

She did not see her sister's face, did not know what was passing within her.

After a silence which seemed so long that one must die of it, Ekaterina Dmitrievna said angrily:

"What shocking thing has Nikolai Ivanovitch been saying about me?"

"You know, Katia."

"I don't."

The words fell from her like an icicle.

Dasha threw herself at her feet.

"Then it's not true? Katia, my dear, beautiful sister, it isn't true, is it?" And she began to shower kisses on Katia's warm, scented hands with the tiny blue veins running along them like rivulets.

"Of course, it's not true," Ekaterina Dmitrievna replied, closing her eyes wearily. "You're going to cry now and your eyes will be red tomorrow and your nose swollen."

She lifted Dasha and for a long time pressed her

lips against her hair. "I'm so stupid," Dasha mumbled into her breast. But at this moment, from behind the study door, Nikolai Ivanovitch's voice said loudly and deliberately:

"She is lying."

The sisters turned round quickly, but the door was shut.

"Go to bed, my child," Ekaterina Dmitrievna said. "I'll go and clear up the situation. A pleasant job, when I can barely stand."

She led Dasha to her room and made the sign of the cross over her, then she returned to the dining-room, snatched up her handbag, rearranged the combs in her hair and with her finger knocked softly on the study door.

"Open the door, Nikolai."

There was a sinister silence, then a snort and a turn of the key. Ekaterina Dmitrievna entered to see her husband's broad back moving towards the table, near which he sat down on a leather armchair, rested his elbows on the arms of it, and taking up an ivory paper-knife, he savagely passed it along the back of a book (a novel by Wassermann entitled "A Man of Forty").

All this was done as though Ekaterina Dmitrievna were not in the room.

She sat down on the couch, pulled her skirt over her legs, put her handkerchief into her handbag, which she shut with a snap. At the sound the tuft of hair on the top of Nikolai Ivanovitch's head trembled.

"There is one thing I don't understand," she said. "You are free to think what you choose, but please don't initiate Dasha into your moods."

At this he turned quickly in his chair and stretching out his neck and beard, said, barely moving his lips:

"You have the impertinence to call this my mood?"

"I don't understand you."

"Hm! You don't understand! You understand well enough how to behave like a woman of the streets!"

At these words Ekaterina Dmitrievna opened her lips slightly. She looked at her husband's purple, perspiring face, distorted with rage, and said quietly:

"Since when did you learn to speak to me disrespectfully?"

"I humbly beg your pardon, but I can't talk in any other way. I want to know the details."

"What details?"

"Don't lie to me, to my face."

"Oh, it's about that, is it?" From exhaustion Ekaterina Dmitrievna rolled her large eyes. "The other day I said some absurd thing or other to you. . . . I had forgotten all about it."

"With whom did it happen?"

"I don't know."

"For the second time, don't lie to me."

"I'm not lying. There's no fun in lying to you. I did say something; I'd say anything when I'm angry, but I'd forgotten all about it."

Though Nikolai Ivanovitch's face was stony at these words, his heart leapt with joy. "Thank God! She was lying about herself." He was now safe to believe nothing, to ease his mind.

He got up from his chair, walked up and down the room, then stopped in the middle of the carpet, and flourishing the ivory paper-knife in the air, he began a tirade about the decline of the family, loose morals, and now forgotten sacred duties of women, wives, mothers of children and husbands' helpmates. He reproached Ekaterina Dmitrievna with lack of spiritual

interests, with wanton spending of money, which he earned with his blood ("not the blood, but the wagging of the tongue," thought Ekaterina Dmitrievna), nay, more than blood, with the whole of his nervous energy. He reproached her with her careless way of choosing her friends, with disorder in the house, with her passion for "that idiot" the Great Mogul and with "those disgusting pictures in your bourgeois drawing-room, that make me sick."

Nikolai Ivanovitch completely unburdened himself.

It was four o'clock in the morning. When her husband had ceased, Ekaterina Dmitrievna said:

"There is nothing more loathsome than a fat, hysterical man."

She rose and went into her bedroom.

Nikolai Ivanovitch was not even hurt by these words. He undressed slowly and hung his clothes on the back of a chair; then he wound his watch and crept into his clean bed, made for him on the couch since yesterday.

"We live badly. We must alter our way of life. It's not well, not well," he thought and then opened a book to calm his nerves for the coming sleep, but instantly put it down and listened. All was still in the house. Then he heard some one blow her nose. At the sound his heart beat fast. "She is crying," he thought. "I suppose I said too much."

And when he recalled the scene and how Katia had sat and listened to him, he grew immeasurably sorry for her. He raised himself on his elbow about to get out of bed, but a dreadful weariness crept over his body as though from many days' exhaustion. His head dropped on the pillow and he fell fast asleep.

Alone in her neat room, Dasha took the combs out of her hair and shook her head so that all the pins flew

out at once. She scattered her clothes over the chairs, jumped into her white bed and tucked the clothes right up to her chin. She half closed her eyes. "How nice!" she thought, "there's nothing to worry about now; I can sleep." She could see a hobgoblin face from out of the corner of her eye. She curled up and embraced the pillow. A sweet sleep was about to descend on her, when suddenly she could hear Katia's voice saying quite distinctly, "Of course, it's not true!" Dasha opened her eyes. "I never breathed a word to Katia. I only asked her if it were true or not, but she replied as if she knew what I was referring to." The consciousness "Katia has deceived me" cut through her like a knife. Then recalling all the details of their conversation, she was convinced that she had been deceived. She was very upset. Katia had been untrue to her husband, but deceiving, sinning, lying had made her even more fascinating. The blind only would fail to see that new curious, weary gentleness about her. And her lies are enough to make one mad or to fall in love with her. But she is a sinner! "Oh, God, I can't understand it!"

Dasha was confused and excited. She drank some water, lighted the lamp and put it out again, and until morning she tossed about in bed, feeling that she could not blame Katia, nor could she understand what she had done.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna, too, could not sleep that night. She was lying on her back, helpless, her arms stretched out on the silk counterpane, and without wiping her tears, she wept copiously. Things were not well with her; she felt confused and unclean and could do nothing to alter it. She would never be like Dasha—spirited and severe. She wept, too, because Nikolai Ivanovitch had called her a woman of the streets and her drawing-

room bourgeois. And she wept still more bitterly when she remembered how last night Alexis Alexeyevitch Bezsonov had taken her in a fast-driven cab to some hotel outside the town, and there, without knowing or loving her, without feeling in any way near and dear to her, he had shamelessly and leisurely possessed himself of her, as though she had been a dummy, one of those pink dummies exhibited in the window of Madame Duclet's Parisian hat shop on the Morskaya.

V

In a newly built house on the Vasiliev Island, on the fifth floor, in a flat belonging to Ivan Ilyitch Teliegin, an engineer, were the premises of the so-called Central Station for Combating the Commonplace.

Teliegin had taken the flat for a year, at the end of a lease, at a cheap rent. He had reserved one room for himself, and the others, furnished with iron bedsteads, pine tables and chairs, he had let to other lively bachelors. These had been found for him by his friend and school chum, Peter Petrovitch Sapojkov.

They included Alexander Ivanovitch Jirov, a law student; Antoshka Arnoldov, a journalist; Valet, an artist, and a young girl, Elisaveta Kievna by name, who had not yet found a vocation in life to suit her taste.

The lodgers rose late, at the hour when Teliegin usually came home for luncheon, and each would leisurely begin the daily round. Arnold Arnoldov would take a tram to the Nevsky to a certain café where he picked up news and wrote his "copy," Valet would usually proceed to work on his own portrait, while Sapojkov would lock himself in to work, that is, to pace the room with exclamations, being the preparations for his speeches and articles on the new art. Jirov would go in to Elisaveta Kievna to discuss the problems of life in a soft, purring voice. Jirov wrote verses, but was too conceited to let any one see them. Elisaveta Kievna considered him a genius.

Besides conversing with Jirov and the other lodgers,

Elisaveta Kievna knitted squares in different coloured wools, which were not intended for any special purpose, and sang Little Russian songs, out of tune and in a deep, powerful voice, or she dressed her hair in some wonderful way, or, tired of singing and dressing her hair, she would let it loose down her back and lie down on her bed with a book, which she devoured until her head ached.

Elisaveta Kievna was a tall, good-looking girl with rosy cheeks and short-sighted eyes that seemed almost as if they had been pencilled. She dressed so badly that even Teliegin's lodgers remonstrated.

When a new person came to the house, she would invite him to her room and a conversation would begin, reaching to such heights and abysses as to make the head go round. Had not her interlocutor a strong desire to commit some crime? she would ask. Could he not for the mere sensation of the thing, kill her, Elisaveta Kievna? Had he not that feeling of "self-provocation," a quality she held all remarkable people possessed?

Teliegin's lodgers even fixed a list of these questions on her door, which gratified her and caused her to laugh a great deal. She was a girl dissatisfied with everything, who expected "revolutions" to happen and "terrible events" that would make life so interesting that one would live with every part of one's being and not go about bored with one's hair down one's back.

Teliegin was greatly amused by his lodgers, whom he thought worthy people, but cranks, and for lack of time he entered little into their diversions. At any rate, he was quite satisfied even when they borrowed small sums of money from him (he had not much himself) or paid for their rooms by verses, portraits, or simply by a heart-to-heart talk.

One day, at Christmas, Peter Petrovitch Sapojkov gathered the lodgers together and said to them:

"Comrades, the time has come to act. There are many of us, but we are scattered. Until now we have acted separately and timidly. We must now close up the ranks and strike a blow at bourgeois society. First of all we must form ourselves into an executive group and then we must issue a proclamation. I have it here. 'We are the new Columbuses! We are the ingenious instigators! We are the seed of the new humanity! We demand from the bloated bourgeois society that it cast away all its prejudices. Henceforth there are no virtues. The family, social respectability and marriage must go. We demand it. Men and women must be naked, free and happy. Sexual relationship is the inheritance of society. Boys and girls, men and women, come out of your cramped dens, go naked and happy, and sing and dance beneath the sun of the wild beast!"

Then Sapojkov said that it was necessary to issue a futurist journal under the title of "The Dish of the Gods," the money for which would be given partly by Teliegin, and the rest—some three thousand—they must snatch from the jaws of the bourgeoisie.

This is how there came to be formed "The Central Station for Combating the Commonplace," a title invented by Teliegin, who, returning from the works, laughed till the tears came when he heard of Sapojkov's scheme. Soon after they set to work to bring out the first number of "The Dish of the Gods." Several rich patrons—advocates—and Sashka Sakelman himself even, as though in fear of being considered behind the times, supplied the required three thousand. Linen note-paper was ordered with the incomprehensible heading "Centrifugue" printed on it, then invitations were sent out to contributors and

a general request made for material. Valet, the artist, suggested that Sapojkov's room, which had been turned into the editorial room, should be decorated with caricatures. He accordingly drew on the walls twelve portraits of himself. The question of furniture required long consideration. Elisaveta Kievna suggested that the editorial staff should lie on rugs. In the end it was decided to remove from the room everything but a large table, which was pasted over with golden paper; visitors were expected to stand.

With the advent of the first number "The Dish of the Gods" was the talk of the town. Some were amazed, others maintained that there was some deeper significance in it and that in the near future Pushkin would have to be consigned to the archives. Chirva, the critic, was beside himself; in "The Dish of the Gods" he had been called a scoundrel. Ekaterina Dmitrievna immediately took out a subscription for a whole year and decided to invite the futurists to her Tuesday at-homes.

The "Central Station" sent Peter Petrovitch to sup with the Smokovnikovs. He appeared in a dirty coat of green fustian, hired from a theatrical shop, from the play "Manon Lescaut." Sapojkov purposely ate a great deal at supper and laughed so loudly that the sound was unpleasant to his own ears; he sought to insult Chirva, but under the influence of his "magnetic" eye, he refrained and contented himself by being unpleasant to the hostess, saying, "Your fish had a very soul in it." Then he threw himself back and began to smoke, steadying his pince-nez on his perspiring nose.

On the whole, more had been expected of him and when he had gone Ekaterina Dmitrievna said, "Well, what do you think? There is something clever about him, I feel sure."

After the publication of the second number it was resolved to hold at-homes called "Splendid Blasphemies." To one of these "blasphemies" Dasha had come.

The front door was opened by Jirov, who instantly busied himself taking off Dasha's galoshes, coat, even picking a thread off her cloth dress. Dasha wondered why everything smelt of cabbage in the hall and why the corners were unswept. Slipping sideways along the corridor to the room where the "blasphemy" was held, he asked Dasha, "What perfume do you use? It has an extraordinarily pleasant smell."

Then Dasha wondered at the blatancy of it all. It is true that the walls were covered with eyes, noses, hands, ignominious figures, falling sky-scrapers, in a word, all that comprised a portrait of Vasili Veniamovitch Valet, who was standing there silently with zigzags and patches drawn on his cheeks. It is true that verses were read in exaggeratedly passionate voices about motor cars gliding along the vaulted skies, about "spitting on the heavenly old syphilitic," about young jaws which the author had cracked like nuts, about church domes and some head-splitting, incomprehensible grasshopper in an overcoat, with a Baedeker and field-glasses, who jumped out of the window into the street. To Dasha all these terrors seemed poor and too obvious. She was only attracted to Teliegin. During the interval he went up to Dasha and asked her with a timid smile whether she would like some tea and sandwiches.

"Our tea and sausage are unusually good."

He had a sunburnt face, clean-shaven and simple, and his kindly, blue eyes squinted slightly from nervousness.

Dasha, to give him pleasure, got up and went into the dining-room. There on the table, amidst dirty dishes, was a plate of sandwiches and a bent samovar. Teliegin

instantly collected the plates and put them on the floor in a corner of the room; he looked around for a cloth, then wiped the table with his pocket-handkerchief, poured Dasha out a cup of tea, and selected the "thinnest" sandwich. He did all this slowly, talking the while, as though anxious to make Dasha feel comfortable amid the mess.

"Our housekeeping is in thorough disorder, but our tea and sausage are first rate, from Eliseiev's. There were some sweets, but they are all gone," he compressed his lips and looked at Dasha; fear appeared in his blue eyes and then a resolve, "unless you'll allow me?" and he pulled two caramels out of his waistcoat pocket.

"One wouldn't be lost with a man like that," Dasha thought, and again to give him pleasure, said:

"They are my favourite caramels."

Teliegin sat down sideways opposite Dasha and fixed his gaze on the mustard-pot. His broad forehead wrinkled with the strain. He carefully pulled out his pocket-handkerchief and with a corner of it wiped the sides of his nose, not daring, evidently, to wipe the whole of his face.

Dasha's lips smiled involuntarily. This big, handsome man was so shy and uncertain of himself that he was ready to hide behind the mustard-pot. Somewhere—in Arzamas, she imagined—he must have a sweet little old mother, who wrote him severe letters about not letting the town laundresses lose his linen, about his "incorrigible habit of lending money to any fool that asked for it," about how it was only "through modesty and diligence, my dear child, that you will gain the respect of people." And he, no doubt, sighed over these letters, thinking how far off he was from perfection. Dasha felt a tenderness for him.

"Where do you work?" she asked. Teliegin raised his

eyes, saw her smile and smiled, too. "He understands," Dasha thought.

"At the Obukhovsky works," he said. "We make cylinders for motors and other complicated things."

"Is your work interesting?"

"I can't say. To my mind, all work is interesting."

"I think the workmen must like you very much."

"I've never thought about it, but I don't suppose they do. Why should they? I am very severe with them. We get on capitally, for all that."

"Do tell me, did you like all that went on in the other room?"

Ivan Ilyitch's lips spread into a broad smile; wrinkles disappeared from his forehead and he laughed aloud.

"Scamps! hooligans! wonderful scamps! I'm very pleased with my lodgers, Daria Dmitrievna. You come home worried from the works and some nonsense or other is sure to greet you here. . . . It's amusing to think of the next day."

"I hate these 'blasphemies,'" Dasha said solemnly. "I think they are horrid and disgusting."

He looked her wonderingly in the eyes. "I very much dislike them," she reiterated.

"Of course, I'm more to blame than any one," Ivan Ilyitch said pensively. "I encouraged them. To invite people and make them listen to indecencies all the evening, is certainly. . . . I must thank you, Daria Dmitrievna, for being so frank about it. I am sorry it was so unpleasant for you."

Dasha smiled, looking straight into his face. She could say anything to this man, who was almost a stranger to her, so at ease did she feel with him.

"It seems to me, Ivan Ilyitch, that you ought to like quite other things. I think you are quite a good sort.

You are much better than you think you are, really."

Dasha's elbow was on the table, her chin supported on her hand, her little finger touching her lips. Her eyes laughed; they seemed to him terrifying, so disturbingly beautiful were they, grey and large and cold. Ivan Ilyitch, in great confusion, bending and unbending a teaspoon, tried to efface himself altogether.

Fortunately for him Elisaveta Kievna came into the room just then. She wore a Turkish shawl and her plaited hair was twisted over the ears into two horns. She gave Dasha a long soft hand, introduced herself and sat down.

"I have heard a lot about you from Jirov," she said. "This evening I have been studying your face. You look as if you have been spoiled, which is good."

"Would you like some cold tea, Lisa?" Teliegin hastily intervened.

"No, Teliegin; you know I never take tea. Well, you are, no doubt, asking yourself what strange creature is this talking to you. I am nobody, nothing; not even a female. Stupid and unpleasant in ordinary life."

Ivan Ilyitch, standing by the table, turned away in despair. Dasha lowered her eyes. Elisaveta Kievna, observing her with a smile, continued.

"You are smart, well-off and pretty. You need not deny it, for you know you are. Dozens of men are in love with you. How dreadful to think that it will end in such a commonplace way. Some base man will walk you off and you will bear him children and die. How very dull!"

Dasha's lips trembled at the affront.

"I do not intend to be other than commonplace," she said, "and I fail to understand why you are so interested in my future."

Elisaveta Kievna gave a broader smile, but her eyes were sad and compassionate.

"I should have warned you that I am nobody as a human being and loathsome as a woman. Very few people can stand me and those only out of pity, like Teliegin."

"What damned nonsense you are talking, Lisa," he muttered, not raising his head.

"I make no demands on you, Teliegin. Calm yourself." And again she turned to Dasha. "Have you ever seen a storm on the Black Sea? I have lived through a storm. There was a man whom I loved and he hated me, naturally. When the storm began I said to him 'Come' and sprang into the boat. Out of spite he jumped in after me. We were carried out to the open sea. How jolly it was! damnably jolly! He sat there all green. I undressed quite naked and said to him, 'Tie me to the mast! . . .'"

"Look here, Lisa," Teliegin interposed, screwing up his lips and nose, "you know it is not true. None of this happened. I know it didn't."

Elisaveta Kievna looked at him with an incomprehensible smile and suddenly began to laugh. She put her arms on the table, hid her face in them and laughed, so that her full shoulders shook.

It seemed to Dasha that the whole absurd conversation had been like a scratching upon glass. She rose and told Teliegin that she wanted to go home, if possible, without taking leave of any one.

Ivan Ilyitch helped Dasha into her coat as carefully as though the coat, too, formed part of her being; he kept striking matches as he accompanied her down the dark staircase, and apologized that it was so dark, slippery and draughty. He walked with her as far as the

street corner, put her into a cab, driven by an old man and drawn by an old horse, both of whom were covered with snow. For a long while he stood there, without coat or hat, watching the low sleigh with the severe maiden inside it, fade away in the yellow fog. Then slowly he walked back to the house and into the dining-room. By the table, just as he had left her, with her face on her arm, was Elisaveta Kievna. Teliegin scratched his chin and said with a frown: "Lisa."

She quickly, too quickly, raised her head and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Lisa, I'm sorry, but why do you always say things that make one ashamed and uncomfortable?"

"You've fallen in love," Elisaveta Kievna said quietly, still looking at him with her sad, short-sighted eyes that seemed almost as if they had been pencilled. "I can see the signs. What a bore!"

"It's absolutely untrue. And I find your remarks extremely offensive."

"I'm sorry. People who've done wrong are beaten and told not to cry." She rose slowly and walked out, dragging the Turkish shawl behind her on the dusty floor.

Ivan Ilyitch went into his room, which he paced to and fro for some time. Then he returned to the dining-room, poured himself out some cold tea and was about to sit down, when suddenly he recollected himself and gazed at the chair in horror. It was the chair on which Daria Dimitrievna had only just been sitting. It might be absurd and sentimental, but the chair must be removed from that place. Teliegin shrugged his shoulders and carried the chair into his own room, where he put it in a corner. Then he took hold of his nose with the whole palm of his hand and laughed aloud.

"What nonsense! What utter nonsense!"

To Dasha the encounter had been one among many; she had met a very nice man and that was all. She was at an age when people see nor hear well, sound being drowned by the quick rush of the blood, while the eyes, as in a mirror, can see in anything, be it a human face or a glossy leaf on a tree, only their own reflection. At such an age only deformity can strike the imagination, whereas handsome people, alluring landscapes, the humble beauty of art are looked upon as the usual retinue of a queen of nineteen.

It was not thus with Ivan Ilyitch. Now that more than a week had gone by since Dasha's visit, he wondered how imperceptibly (he had not shaken hands with her at first) and simply (she had come in, sat down and placed her muff on her knees) she had come to their bare flat, this girl with the soft, rosy complexion, in her dark dress and her ash-coloured hair, dressed high on the head, and her proud, childlike mouth. It seemed incomprehensible that he had talked to her calmly of sausages from Eliseiev's. And he had given her the warm caramels which had lain in his pocket to eat. Brute that he was!

Ivan Ilyitch had, during his life (he had recently reached his twenty-ninth year), been in love six times. The first, while he was still a realist, in Kazan, was a buxom girl—Marusia Khvoyeva, the daughter of a veterinary surgeon, who for some time now fruitlessly paced the main street at four o'clock in the afternoon in her plush coat. But Marusia had had no time to waste; Ivan Ilyitch was thrown over, and without any of the intermediate stages, he transferred his affection to the star, Ada Tilly, who astonished the natives of Kazan by appearing in all the operettas, no matter to what period

they belonged, in a bathing-costume. The management even announced this feature in their posters, "The Famous Ada Tilly with her beautiful legs."

Ivan Ilyitch was so carried away that he even went to her house with a bunch of flowers, which he had picked in the town garden. Ada Tilly gave the flowers to some shaggy dog to smell and remarked that the local food had upset her digestion, and would Ivan Ilyitch mind going to the chemist's for her?

Then, when a student in Petersburg, he was attracted to a medical student, a Miss Vilbushevitch, and used to meet her in the anatomy theatre, but nothing came of the affair and Miss Vilbushevitch eventually went away to a post in the Zemstvo.

On one occasion Ivan Ilyitch fell in love with a shopgirl from some big establishment—Zinotchka was her name—and in his tenderness and agitation he did everything she asked him to do, but on the whole he sighed with relief when Zinotchka, together with the department of her firm, went away to Moscow. With her departure there passed away that continuous feeling of unfulfilled obligations.

His last feeling of sentiment took place in the summer of last year, in the month of June. On the opposite side of the courtyard on which his window looked out was another window, at which every day before sunset a thin, pale girl would stand, brushing her one and only dress, of a reddish colour. She would put it on afterwards and go and sit in the park.

It was in the park, on the Petersburg side, that Ivan Ilyitch first spoke to her and from that day, every evening they would walk together, admiring the Petersburg sunsets and talking about things in general.

The girl, Olia Komarova, worked in a notary's of-

fice; she was lonely and ailing and coughed all the time. They would talk about this cough, about her illness, about how miserable it was for a person to be alone in the evenings, about her friend Kira, who fell in love with a nice man and went away to the Crimea. Their conversations were dull. Olia Komarova had so little faith in her fortune that without any restraint she would tell Ivan Ilyitch her most intimate thoughts, even saying that she looked forward to his falling in love with her and taking her away to the Crimea.

Ivan Ilyitch was sorry for the girl and respected her, but he could not love her, though sometimes, after their talks, when lying on his couch in the twilight, he would think what an egoist he was, how sensual and brutal and bad.

In the autumn, Olia Komarova caught a chill and fell ill with pneumonia. Ivan Ilyitch took her to a hospital and from thence to the cemetery. Before her death she asked him:

"If I get well, will you marry me?"

"On my honour, I will," he had replied.

His feelings for Dasha had nothing in common with his former sentiments. Elisaveta Kievna had said that he had fallen in love. But you can fall in love only with an object possible of attainment; you cannot fall in love with a statue, with a cloud or with Pushkin's poetry. You can only dream about these things.

He could not be in love with Dasha because he felt how unattainable she was. He could not even dream about Dasha because she was a living being who drank tea, ate sausage and shook hands in a firm, hearty kind of way. For Dasha he experienced a third, peculiar feeling, which he was unable to analyze; it was the more incomprehensible in that there was so little reason for

it—just a few moments' conversation and a chair in the corner of his room.

The feeling was not even very strong or great, but Ivan Ilyitch now wanted to be different, more particular, and he began to take careful stock of himself.

"If you only think of it, I shall soon be thirty and so far I've lived as the grass grows. Terrible neglect, egoism and lack of discrimination of people. A filthy business, on the whole. I must reform before it's too late."

At the end of March, on one of those early spring days, which had dawned over the town, white and warm in its covering of snow, when from early morning the water could be heard dripping from roofs and gutters, and rushing down drain-pipes, making the green water-barrels beneath them overflow, when the snow was being cleared from the streets and vapour rose from the asphalt, on which dry patches appeared, your winter's coat hung heavily on your shoulders and you looked around and saw some man with a pointed beard, walking along in his jacket only, and every one looked at him and smiled, and you raised your head, and above, the sky was bottomless and blue, as though it had just been washed with water—it was on such a day, at half past three, that Ivan Ilyitch left the engineering office of Simens and Galske, unbuttoned his skunk coat, blinked his eyes from the sun and thought:

"It's good to be alive on such a day."

It was at that moment that he saw Dasha. She was in a blue spring coat, walking at the edge of the pavement, swinging her left arm, which held a parcel; on her blue hat some white daisies bobbed up and down; the expression of her face was pensive and sad. She was coming from the direction where the puddles, the

tram-lines, the glass, the backs of the passers-by and the ground beneath their feet, the spokes of the carriage wheels were shining from the blue depths of the huge sun, rugged and sparkling in all its spring brilliancy.

Dasha seemed to have emerged from the blue and the light, and passed and disappeared in the crowd. Ivan Ilyitch stood for a long time staring in the direction in which she had gone. His heart beat like a hammer. The air was heavy, scented, intoxicating.

Ivan Ilyitch walked slowly to the corner of the street and putting his hands behind his back, stood for a long while looking at the posters on the hoarding. "New and exciting adventures of Jack the Ripper of stomachs of 2400 metres," he read, feeling that he understood nothing but was happy as he had never been happy in his life before.

As he left the hoarding, for the second time he saw Dasha. She had turned and was walking towards him, just as before, with her bobbing daisies and her parcel at the edge of the pavement. He approached her, raised his hat and said:

"Daria Dmitrievna, I shan't be detaining you, I hope, by saying how do you do?"

She almost stared. Then she looked up at him with her cold, blue eyes, in which the green pupils sparkled in the light. She smiled sweetly, held out her hand in a white kid glove and gave his a firm and friendly pressure.

"How lucky to meet you! I was thinking of you today, I was really!" Dasha shook her head and the little white daisies bobbed to and fro.

"I had some business on the Nevsky, but now I've the whole day free. What a day it is!" . . . Ivan Ilyitch pursed up his lips and tried his hardest not to smile.

"Could you walk home with me, Ivan Ilyitch?" Dasha asked.

"Of course, I can."

They turned down a side street and walked in the shade.

"Ivan Ilyitch, you won't think it strange if I were to ask you something? But I know I can ask you anything. Only you must answer me at once, without consideration and frankly. As I ask, you must reply."

Her face was troubled and her brows were drawn.

"It had always seemed to me like this," she waved her hand in the air. "There are thieves and liars and murderers and women of the streets and they exist just like snakes and spiders and mice—I'm afraid of mice—and that all people are a little funny, with their weaknesses and crankiness, but that all are good and true. Now look at that girl coming towards us. Just as she seems so she must be. The whole world seems to me to be painted in wonderful colours. Do you understand what I mean?"

"It's most interesting, Daria Dmitrievna. . . ."

"Wait a moment. Now the picture seems to have tumbled about me and I'm suffocating in darkness. A person may be charming and lovable, yet at the same time may sin in a terrible way. It's not merely a question of stealing cakes from a counter, but to commit a real sin—to lie." Dasha turned away; her chin trembled. "To commit adultery, and a married woman, too. May one sin, then, Ivan Ilyitch?"

"No. One mustn't."

"Why not?"

"One can't say off-hand, but I feel one shouldn't."

"And don't you think I feel so, too? Since two o'clock I've been wandering about the streets in despair.

It's such a beautiful day, so clear, and I can't help feeling that in all these houses, behind the curtains, unenlightened people are hidden, and I must go in to them, don't you see?"

"I don't," he replied hastily.

"I must and will go to them, because life is there, behind the curtains and not here. Oh, how wretched I am! I suppose I'm still a stupid little girl and this town was not meant for little girls, but for grown people."

Dasha stopped at the steps of the house and with the tip of her shoe, began to move over the asphalt a cigarette box some one had thrown away, on which was the picture of a green woman with smoke coming out of her mouth. Ivan Ilyitch, looking at the patent leather tip of Dasha's foot, felt how Dasha was dissolving like a snowflake, was disappearing like a mist. He wanted to keep her, but how could he? The force by which he could have kept her was crushing his heart and gripping his throat. But to Dasha this feeling of his had no more significance than the shadow on the wall, for he himself was no more than dear, kind Ivan Ilyitch.

"Well, good-bye, and thank you so much, Ivan Ilyitch. You're very kind. I do not feel any better for our conversation, but thank you, all the same. You did understand me, didn't you? What things there are in the world! One can't do anything, though; I suppose one must be grown-up. Do come and see us when you can." She smiled, shook his hand, went up the steps and disappeared in the darkness.

Dasha opened the door of her room and stopped in astonishment. There was a smell of fresh flowers and she instantly noticed on her dressing-table a basket with a tall handle and a blue bow and rushed up and buried her face in it. They were Parma violets, several large

bunches, somewhat squashed and damp, with a tender smell of earth and spring about them.

Dasha was excited. Since the morning she had longed for something but did not know what, and now she realized that it had been violets. But who could have sent them? He had thought about her so much that he knew what she wanted even better than herself? The bow, though, seemed out of place. Untying it, Dasha thought:

"She may be restless, but she's not a bad girl. No matter what little sins you may be planning for yourselves, she'll go her own way. You may think she holds her head too high. But there are some people who like it and would think the better of her."

Inside the bow there was a note written on thick paper in a large, unfamiliar handwriting, containing the two words, "Love, Love." On the other side was printed "The Nice Flower Nursery." Some one must have written in the shop "Love, love." Dasha, with the basket in her hand, went out into the passage and called:

"Mogul, who brought me these flowers?"

The Great Mogul looked at the basket and sighed, as though none of those things concerned her.

"A boy from the shop brought them to Ekaterina Dmitrievna and she asked me to put them in your room."

"Did the boy say who sent them?"

"He didn't say anything, but only asked me to give them to the mistress."

Dasha went back to her room and stood by the window with her hands behind her. Through the glass she could see the sunset; behind the brick house opposite it spread over the sky in green streaks. A star

appeared in the green void, glistening as though newly washed. Below, in the narrow street, now misty, along the whole length of it, simultaneously, the electric lamps lit up, the light of which did not yet show much. Near by came the hoot of a motor-car and she saw it disappearing down the street in the gloom.

It was quite dark in the room and the violets smelt sweet. He had sent them, the man whom Katia had sinned with. That was quite clear. Dasha stood there thinking how like a fly she had fallen into the net of a subtle and alluring sin. It was in the fragrant scent of the flowers, in the two words, "Love, love," disturbing and exciting, in the gentle charm of the evening.

Suddenly her heart began to beat fast. Dasha felt something tangible, something she could almost see and hear and touch, something forbidden and mysterious, that scorched her with its intense sweetness. She had suddenly solved the question of herself, had assumed freedom. There was no gainsaying that she knew what had happened; in that moment she was already on the other side. Her severity, her icy barrier, had dissolved like a mist, just like the mist at the bottom of the street, where the motor-car had disappeared, bearing away the two ladies in white hats.

Only her heart beat fast and her head was slightly dizzy and over her body delicious cold shivers crept and something seemed to sing within her, "I am alive, I love, the whole world is mine, mine, mine."

"Now listen, my friend," Dasha said aloud, "you are a virgin, and you're simply a bad character."

She walked over to a corner of the room, where she sat down in a soft armchair, and, slowly taking off the wrapper from a cake of chocolate, she tried to recall all the events of the last two weeks since Katia's sin.

In the house nothing was changed. Katia had been even peculiarly gentle with Nikolai Ivanovitch. He went about in a happy state and was planning to build a country house in Finland. Dasha alone had had to bear "the tragedy" of these two blind people. To be the first to broach the subject with her sister she dared not, and Katia, who had always been so sensitive to Dasha's moods, on this occasion, seemed to notice nothing. Ekaterina Dmitrievna ordered for herself and Dasha new spring costumes for Easter, spent a great deal of time at tailors' and dressmakers', helped to arrange charitable bazaars, at Nikolai Ivanovitch's request, organized a literary entertainment for the unproclaimed purpose of raising money for the left section of the Social Democratic party, the so-called Bolsheviks, who were starving in Paris, received visitors on Thursdays as well as Tuesdays—in a word, had not a spare moment to herself.

"And you've been a coward all the while, too timid to decide on anything; you've only been worrying about the moral problem, about which you understand nothing and never will understand until you singe your own wings," Dasha thought, laughing softly to herself. In the dark lake into which the icy balls had fallen and from whence no good could be expected, there rose up, as often happened these days, the corrosive, sinister image of Bezsonov. She had solved the riddle of herself and he dominated her thoughts. Dasha grew quiet. In the dark room a clock ticked.

Somewhere in the house a distant door banged and she heard her sister's voice ask: "Has she been back long?"

Dasha rose and went into the hall. Ekaterina Dmitrievna instantly said to her: "Why are you so flushed?"

Nikolai Ivanovitch rubbed his hands hard and dropped

some witty remark about the resigned stage lover's store. Dasha looked at his soft thick lips with hatred and followed her sister into her bedroom. There, sitting by the dressing-table, which was elegant and beautiful, like everything in her sister's room, she listened to the gossip about the people they had met during their walk.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna, as she talked, tidied the mirror cupboard, in which were gloves, pieces of lace, veils, silk slippers, all sorts of small nothings, that smelt of her perfumes. It appeared that Rosa Abramovna did not have her dresses made at Madame Duclet's but at home and very badly made they were, too, that Vedrensky had again spoilt a case and had no money; she had met his wife, who complained that they found it hard to live. At the Timiriasevs' they had the measles. Sheinberg had again parted from that hysterical creature of his; it was said that she tried to shoot herself in his flat. "And the spring has come, the spring! What a day it has been! People are swarming in the streets like intoxicated flies. Oh, yes, and whom do you think I've met? Akundin. He assured me that before very long we shall have a revolution. You see, the factories and the country are in a ferment. If only it would come soon! Nikolai Ivanovitch was so elated that he took me into the Pivato and we had a bottle of champagne for no other cause than in honour of the future revolution."

Dasha listened to her sister in silence, stopping and unstopping the crystal bottles on the table.

"Katia," she said suddenly, "as I am I'm no use to any one, don't you see?" Ekaterina Dmitrievna, her hand inside a silk stocking, turned and looked intently at her sister. "And what is more, I'm no use to myself as I am. It is as though a person had taken to eating

raw carrots and thought that thereby he became superior to others."

"I don't understand you," Ekaterina Dmitrievna said. Dasha looked at her sister's back and sighed.

"All are bad, every one I must be judging. One is stupid, another is horrid, a third is dirty. Only I am all right. I am out of place here and it worries me. I judge you, too, Katia."

"Why?" asked Ekaterina Dmitrievna softly, without turning.

"Just think of it. I go about with my nose in the air, that's the sum total of my superiority. It's merely foolish and I'm tired of being a stranger among you all. Don't you see, Katia, I'm very much attracted to a certain man."

Dasha had spoken with her head down; she had thrust a finger into one of the little crystal bottles and could not pull it out again.

"I'm glad to hear it, my dear, if you like him. You'll be happy. Who should be happy, if not you?" Ekaterina Dmitrievna gave a slight sigh.

"But you see, Katia, it's not so simple as all that. According to my idea, I'm not in love with him."

"If you like him, you will love him."

"The whole trouble is that I don't like him."

"But you've only just said that you are attracted to him. You're really——"

"Don't quibble, Katia, dear. Do you remember the Englishman in Sestroretsk? I was attracted to him, even in love with him. But then I was more myself. . . . I used to be angry and hide myself and cry at night, but it all flowed off me like water. But this man . . . I cannot even tell whether it is he. . . . Yes, it is he. . . . Yes, it is he. . . . He has turned my head.

. . . I am quite different now. I feel as though I had inhaled some vapour. . . . If he were to come into my room now, I wouldn't stir. . . ."

"My God, Dasha, what are you saying?"

"Isn't that what is called sin, Katia? I feel it."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna sat down on the edge of her sister's chair and drawing her close to herself, took her hot hand and kissed the palm, but Dasha gently disengaged herself, sighed, and resting her head on her hand, stared out of the dark window at the stars.

"Who is he, Dasha?"

"Alexis Alexeyevitch Bezsonov."

At this Katia sat down on the chair near by, clutched her throat and remained immovable. Dasha could not see her sister's face, which was hidden in the shadow, but she felt that she had said something terrible.

"So much the better," she thought, turning away, and with this "so much the better," she felt both relieved and desolate.

"Why can't I do what others do? For two years I have listened to the tale of some six hundred and sixty-six love affairs and in the whole of my life I have only been kissed once by a schoolboy in a hut on the skating rink."

She sighed heavily and ceased. Ekaterina Dmitrievna now sat bent, her hands dropped on her knees.

"Bezsonov is a very wicked man," she said. "He's a terrible man, Dashenka. Do you hear me?"

"Yes."

"He will break you completely."

"But what can I do now?"

"I won't allow it! Let others . . . let me perish, but not you, not you, my dear!"

"A crow is bad; it is black in body and soul," Dasha

said laughing. "What is there bad about Bezsonov? Tell me."

"I can't tell you. . . . I don't know. . . . But I shudder when I think of him."

"But I thought that you, too, rather liked him."

"Never! I hate him! The Lord preserve you from him!"

"Now, Katia, my dear, you've really fired my curiosity. Now I shall certainly fall into his net."

"What are you saying? Have you gone mad?"

Dasha was pleased by the conversation; she seemed to be walking the plank on tiptoe. She was gratified by Katia's excitement. She hardly thought of Bezsonov, but purposely began talking of her feeling towards him, about the occasions on which they had met, about his face. She so exaggerated everything as to make it appear that all her nights were spent in sinful thoughts and that she was ready to run to Bezsonov that very moment. At last she herself was amused. She wanted to take Katia by the shoulders and kiss her and say, "If there is a little fool, it is you, Katusha," but Ekaterina Dmitrievna suddenly slipped from her chair to the floor and seizing Dasha, she pressed her face against her knees, and trembling violently, she cried:

"Forgive me! Forgive me! Dasha, forgive me!"

Dasha was alarmed. Bending down to her sister, from fear and pity she, too, began to cry, and sobbing, asked Katia what she meant and what there was to forgive. But Ekaterina Dmitrievna merely clenched her teeth and fondled and kissed Dasha's hands.

VI

At dinner, observing the two sisters, Nikolai Ivanovitch said: "Hm! Can I not be informed of the cause of these tears?"

"The cause is my own vicious mood," Dasha instantly rejoined. "Don't worry yourself, please. I know quite well, without your aid, that the whole of me, this fork included, is not worth your wife's little finger."

After dinner some visitors arrived to coffee. In view of the family mood, Nikolai Ivanovitch decided that they should all go to some drinking place. Kulchok telephoned to a garage; Katia and Dasha were sent to change their dresses. Chirva arrived and hearing where the company was going, lost his temper.

"After all, what suffers most from these continuous drinking bouts? Russian literature."

But he, too, was taken in the motor with the others.

The "Northern Palmera" was noisy and packed with people. It was a large, low basement hall, brilliantly illuminated by six crystal chandeliers. The chandeliers, the tobacco smoke, which met them at the door, the men in evening dress, the bare shoulders of the women, their coloured wigs of green, purple and grey, the fine sprays of osprey, the precious stones, shimmering on throats and ears in clusters of orange, blue and ruby rays, the waiters, slipping in and out among the crowd, the lean man with the clump of clammy hair sticking to his forehead, his uplifted arms, his magic baton, cutting the air by the red velvet curtains, the gleam of the brass trum-

pets were all repeated and multiplied in the walls of mirrors, until it seemed that in endless perspective the whole human race, the whole world was gathered there.

Dasha, drawing her champagne up through a straw, observed the tables meanwhile. By a steaming pail and some fruit peel sat a clean-shaven man with powdered cheeks. His eyes were half closed, his lips cynically compressed. He was sitting there reflecting, no doubt, that the time would come when the electric light would go out and all the people would be dead. Over there were a man and wife. They had probably quarrelled at home and were still snapping at each other in whispers, though there was a smile on the woman's fat face and the man was lazily shifting his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

The curtains trembled and parted on either side and a little Japanese, as small as a child, with a tragically wrinkled face, appeared on the platform and began to manipulate in the air various coloured balls, plates and torches. As she watched him, Dasha thought:

"What did Katia mean by 'Forgive me, forgive me'?"

And suddenly a band of iron seemed to grip her head, her heart stopped beating. "Could it be?" She shook her head and sighed deeply, and without giving herself time to consider the significance of her "Could it be?" she looked across at her sister.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna was sitting at the other end of the table, looking so weary and sad and beautiful that Dasha's eyes filled with tears. She raised her finger to her lips and blew on it imperceptibly. It was a sign agreed upon between them. Katia noticed it and gave a slow, gentle smile.

About two o'clock a dispute arose as to where they should go next. Ekaterina Dmitrievna suggested home,

but Nikolai Ivanovitch ruled that he would go where the others went and the "others" decided to go "further afield."

Just then, through the dispersing crowd, Dasha caught sight of Bezsonov. He was sitting with his elbow resting far on the table, listening intently to Akundin, who, with a half-gnawed cigarette in his mouth, was saying something and drawing rapidly with his finger-nail on the tablecloth. It was on Akundin's flying finger-nail that Bezsonov's gaze was fixed. It seemed to Dasha that above the din she heard the words "An end, an end to everything," but they were both hidden from view by a stout Tartar waiter. Katia and Nikolai Ivanovitch rose and Dasha called out; she stood for some moments, her curiosity aroused, excited and dishevelled.

When they came out into the street the frosty air smelt unexpectedly keen and sweet. The stars twinkled in the dark purple sky. Some one behind Dasha said, laughing, "It's a devilishly fine night!" A motor glided up to the pavement and from behind it, out of the petrol fumes, there stepped a ragged individual, who pulled off his cap and with a flourish, opened the door of the car. Dasha stood to look at him as she stepped in. He was thin, had a growth of bristles on his unshaven face and a bitter mouth. He was shivering and pressed his elbows against his sides.

"A pleasant evening, spent in the temple of luxury and emotional delights!" he called out bitterly in a hoarse voice, adroitly catching the forty-kopeck piece some one had thrown to him. Dasha felt that his dark, angry eyes had pierced through her.

They returned home late. Dasha lay on her back in bed. She did not fall asleep, but seemed to lose consciousness of her body, so exhausted was she.

Suddenly, with a groan, she pushed the clothes off her chest, sat up and opened her eyes. The sun shone in through the window on the floor. "Heavens! What a horrible thing it was!" She was so frightened that she nearly cried, but when she came to herself, she seemed to have forgotten what it was all about. Only in her heart there remained a pain, as from some horrible nightmare.

After luncheon, Dasha went to her lectures, entered her name for the examination, bought some books and until dinner time was severe and industrious, learning by heart a boring course in Roman law. In the evening she again had to put on silk stockings (in the mornings it had been decided to wear cotton ones), to powder her arms and shoulders and to redress her hair. "I should like to make a bun on the nape of the neck, but people are all for a fashionable headdress. How can I make one, when my hair won't stay up?" It was all very troublesome. On her new blue silk dress there was a stain from champagne, on the very front of it.

Dasha grew suddenly so grieved about her dress, so grieved at her wasted life that she sat down and burst into tears with the spoilt skirt in her hand. Nikolai Ivanovitch was about to come in at the door, but catching sight of Dasha in her chemise and in tears, he called his wife. Katia rushed in, seized the dress, exclaiming, "We will soon get rid of this!" She called the Great Mogul, who came in with some benzine and hot water.

The dress was cleaned, Dasha was helped to dress, while Nikolai Ivanovitch kept pacing up and down the hall saying, "It's a first night, you must remember, we mustn't be late!" Of course, they arrived at the theatre late.

Sitting in a box beside her sister, Dasha watched a

man with a false beard and unnaturally wide-open eyes, who stood by a flat tree, talking to a girl in bright pink.

"Sophia Ivanovna, I love you, I love you!" And he held her hand. Though the play was not at all sad, Dasha wanted to cry. She was sorry for the girl in bright pink and annoyed that the plot did not work out to her liking. The girl, it appeared, loved and did not love and when the man embraced her, she laughed like a mermaid and ran away to the villain, whose white trousers gleamed higher up the stage among the tree trunks. The man clutched his head and swore to destroy some manuscript, the work of his life, and the first act was finished.

Some friends came into the box and there began the usual hastily started conversation.

Little Sheinberg with his bald head and clean-shaven, wrinkled face which seemed to jump out of his stiff collar said that the play was interesting.

"The sex problem again, but cleverly presented. Man must, after all, make an end to this cursed question.

To which Burov, a tall man, a Liberal and prominent examining magistrate, whose wife had run away the Christmas before with the owner of some racing stables, replied:

"Who must? As far as I am concerned, the question is settled. A woman deceives by the very fact of her existence, a man deceives by the help of art. The sex question is an abomination and art is merely one of the aspects of capital crime."

Nikolai Ivanovitch laughed and glanced at his wife. Burov continued gloomily.

"When the time comes for the bird to lay an egg, the male puts on a brightly coloured tail. That's a lie, because naturally his tail is grey, not bright. When a

flower blooms on the tree that is also a lie, a delusion, because the essence is in the ugly root beneath the ground. A man lies most of all. Flowers do not bloom on him and he has no tail, so he takes refuge in his tongue and invents love and all the things connected with it—a twofold and horrible lie. It's a thing enigmatic for young ladies only of tender age," he looked askance at Dasha, "but in our dull times, unfortunately, the most serious-minded people are amused by it. Yes, Russia is suffering from indigestion."

With a grimace he bent over a box of chocolates, and rummaging about in it with his fingers, picked out one filled with rum, put it in his mouth, then looked through his opera glasses that were hanging on a strap across his shoulder.

The conversation turned on political stagnation and reaction. Kulchok, working his eyebrows, related the latest court scandal in an excited whisper.

"It's like a nightmare!" Sheinberg said hastily. Nikolai Ivanovitch slapped himself on the knee.

"It's a revolution we want, a revolution immediately; otherwise we'll simply perish. I have information"—he lowered his voice—"that the factories are in a very disturbed state."

In his excitement the whole of Sheinberg's ten fingers flew into the air.

"But when, when? One can't wait indefinitely."

"We'll live to see it, Yakov Alexandrovitch, you wait," Nikolai Ivanovitch said cheerfully, "and Your Excellency shall have the portfolio of the Minister of Justice."

Dasha was tired of listening to these problems of revolutions and portfolios. With an elbow resting on the velvet ledge of the box and an arm round Katia's waist she looked down into the body of the house, now

and again smiling to an acquaintance. Dasha saw and knew that she and her sister were admired and the glances distinguished in the crowd—tender on the part of the men and spiteful on the part of the women—the fragments of sentences and the smiles, excited her like the spring air. Her tearful mood had passed. One of her cheeks, near the ear, was tickled by Katia's hair.

"I do love you, Katia!" Dasha said in a whisper.

"And I you."

"Are you pleased that I live with you?"

"Very."

Dasha tried to think of something else pleasant to say to Katia, when suddenly she caught sight of Teliegin. He was in a black coat, with his hat and programme in his hand and had for long been standing unobserved, staring at the Smokovnikovs' box. His strong, sunburnt face stood out from amidst the pale and thin faces about him. His hair was lighter than Dasha had imagined; it was like corn.

When his eye met Dasha's he bowed, then turned away, and in doing so dropped his stick. Bending down to pick it up, he bumped against a stout lady sitting in the stalls; he apologized and again looked askance at the box, but seeing that Dasha was laughing, he blushed and stepped back, treading on the toes of the publisher of an aesthetic journal entitled "The Chorus of Muses," and with a wave of his hand, he walked towards the exit. Dasha turned to her sister.

"Katia, that's Teliegin."

"I know. Isn't he a dear?"

"He's such a dear that I feel I could kiss him. And you don't know how clever he is, Katia!"

"There now, Dasha. . . ."

"What?"

But her sister was silent. Dasha understood and also ceased. Again her heart was oppressed. There, within her shell, all was not well; she had forgotten for a moment, but looking within again, it was dark, disturbing and stifling.

When the lights went out and the curtains parted, it seemed to Dasha that she had been banished from home and had nowhere to take refuge from herself. She sighed and turned her attention to the stage.

The man with the false beard still went on threatening to burn his manuscript, while the girl, who was sitting by the piano, kept on teasing him. It was evident that the best thing to do was to get the girl married as soon as possible rather than drag out another three acts. All this mental aberration was merely stupid.

Dasha looked up at the painted ceiling of the theatre and there, among clouds, a beautiful nude woman was flying with a clear joyous smile on her lips. "Heavens, isn't she like me!" Dasha thought. Then instantly she regarded herself from a detached point of view. There was a creature in a box, eating chocolates, lying, muddling, waiting for something extraordinary to happen, but nothing happened. "And there is no life for me until I go to him, until I hear his voice, until I feel the whole of him. The rest is a lie. One must simply be honest."

From that evening Dasha stopped asking herself whether she loved Bezsonov or was attracted to him by some wicked, unwholesome curiosity. She now knew that she would go to him and feared the hour. Once she had almost decided to go to her father in Samara, but reflected that a distance of twelve hundred miles would not save her from temptation and put the idea aside.

Her healthy maidenliness was outraged, but what could you do with "the other person" when everything in the world helped her? Besides, it was unbearably humiliating to suffer and think so long about this Bezsonov, who would have none of her, and lived for his own pleasure somewhere near the Kamennoostrovsky Prospect, writing verses about an actress with lace petticoats. And Dasha was every inch of her immersed in him, absorbed by him.

Dasha felt an aversion for herself. She purposely dressed her hair plainly, in a knot on the nape of the neck, put on an old school dress, which she had brought from Samara, and in despair learnt Roman law by heart, refused to go out visiting and renounced all amusements. It was not easy to be honest. Dasha was simply afraid.

Early in April, in the cool of the evening, when the sunset had died down and the faded green sky was illumined by a phosphorescent light that cast no shadows, Dasha was returning home from the islands on foot.

She had told them at home that she was going to a lecture, but instead she had taken a tram to the Elagina Bridge and wandered the whole evening along the bare avenues, across little bridges, gazing now at the water, now at the purple lines in the orange sunset, at the faces of the passers-by, at the carriage lights floating over the mossy tree trunks. She was not thinking of anything and did not hurry.

Her soul was calm and the whole of her being was filled with the spring, salt sea air. Her feet ached, but she did not want to return home to her room, which was filled with so many stifling thoughts.

Along the broad Kamennoostrovsky Prospect carriages rolled quickly by and long motor-cars, while with

jests and laughter groups of pedestrians passed. Dasha turned down a back street.

Here it was still and deserted. There was the green sky above the roofs. Out of every house almost, from behind the curtained windows, strains of music could be heard. Here some one was practising a sonata, there a familiar waltz, there again, from a dark window of an attic with the red sunset reflected in it, the clear sounds of four voices mingled together. It seemed as though in the stillness of the blue evening the very air sang.

And in Dasha too, affected as she was by the sounds, everything seemed to sing and to despair. Her body seemed light and pure, without the least stain.

Dasha turned a corner, read the number of the house on the wall, smiled, and going up to the front door where, above a lion's head of brass, there was a visiting card with "A. Bezsonov" written on it, she loudly rang the bell.

VII

Some one knocked on the iron gate. On a stone seat within the shadow of the gateway a sheepskin coat was seen to move, a hand was held up with a bunch of rattling keys, some one snorted. The sheepskin coat moved, the lock creaked and the heavy gate opened.

Two men came out into the street, their chins muffled in the collars of their coats. They were Bezsonov and Akundin. From out the sheepskin coat the blear-eyed face of the night watchman peered and asked for a tip, Bezsonov thrust a twenty-kopeck piece into the end of his sleeve and turned to the right of the deserted street. Akundin followed somewhat behind, then caught him up and took his arm.

"Well, Alexis Alexeyevitch, what do you think of our prophet, Elijah?" Bezsonov immediately stopped.

"Now, look here, I think it madness! In a stuffy little room up a backyard and up a back stairs amidst his books and smoke to think the way he does! . . . And did you notice his face? It seemed bloodless. Only his lips were curiously red, as though he sucks them with words. I wonder what will happen now, if all he says comes to pass?"

"There would be much fun in the world, Alexis Alexeyevitch."

"It's madness! To expect to set the world on fire from that old sofa of his, amidst the tobacco smoke. It is no use your talking to me. . . . Here it is raining,

and it will go on raining to the end of time. You can't move mountains."

They were standing by a street-lamp. Bezsonov watched the greenish patches of light disappearing in the gloomy drizzle.

The few passers-by, reflected in the dark asphalt, were hurrying to their homes, their hands in their pockets, their noses in their collars. Akundin, in a large grey hat, looked Bezsonov up and down and smiled, stroking his beard.

"We'll sound such a blast on our trumpets of Jericho that not only the walls, but everything will crumble, Alexis Alexeyevitch. Our stunts are devilishly good. We've got the formula. A good deal depends on the formula. 'Open Sesame.' And ours is such a tricky formula that whatever you may apply it to will rot and fall to pieces. And you talk of not being able to move mountains. For the prosperity, let us say, of the Alaunsky hills, we must go and fight the Germans and burn their towns. Hurrah, boys, for the Faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland! But try and apply our formula to that. Comrades, Russians, Germans and so on, you are naked and poor, you, who are the lowest of the low, enough of your blood has been drunk by your oppressors! Come, let us build *universal justice*. We do not ask less of you. It is you only who are human beings, the rest are parasites. What does it mean? What parasites? What is universal justice? Don't you see, Alexis Alexeyevitch, the kind of gesture that is necessary—the same kind with which Jesus Christ from the mount testified to the earthly kingdom. It's essential to go on repeating. You must explain by examples what universal justice is, so that it can be comprehended by the Kashirsky district, by the village of Brukhin, by the peasant Likse

Ivanov Sedmoi, who from the age of twelve has been working at some brickyard for fifty-five kopecks a day, providing his own food. Example: Do you see that stone house over there? We do. The brick manufacturer is sitting inside it, with a watch-chain across his stomach, do you see? We do. He's got a cupboard full of money and there's a severe-looking policeman walking up and down by his windows, do you see him? We do. By universal justice it is all yours, comrades. Do you understand? And you, Alexis Alexeyevitch, accuse us of being theorists. We are like the early Christians. They prostrated themselves before the poor and we before the humble and wronged before the torn and tatered who scarcely look human; we bow down low before them on behalf of the five continents. The early Christians had a formula and we have a formula; they went on crusades and we go on crusades. . . ."

Akundin laughed; he tried to make out Bezsonov's face, which was over-shadowed by his hat. Then, looking at his watch, he added hastily:

"You'll kick against it, but you'll come to us, Alexis Alexeyevitch. We want men like you. . . . The time is near; we are living through the last days. . . . " He laughed to still his excitement and, with a jerk, firmly pressed Bezsonov's hand and disappeared round the corner. For some time the assured sound of his heels along the pavement could still be heard. Bezsonov hailed a cab. Somewhere in the wet gloom some one smacked his lips and a vehicle rattled up. A woman stopped by the lamp-post and also began to watch the disappearing lights. Then she spoke, hardly moving her tongue.

"I will never forgive."

Bezsonov started and looked at her. Her face, wrinkled and drunken, was laughing all over. An izvoz-

chik drove up—a tall peasant with a small horse. "Wo!" he said in a thin voice. Getting into the wet cab Bezsonov remembered that he had an appointment with a woman. It would probably be dull and commonplace. So much the better. He gave the izvozchik the address and putting up his collar, he swam past the hazy outlines of the houses, the diffusing lights from the windows, the little clouds of yellow fog around each street-lamp.

As he drew up at the restaurant the izvozchik said in a broken voice, used only for the gentry:

"You're the fourth I've brought here today. Is the food so good? One of them was in a mighty hurry. 'I'll give you a rouble,' he said, 'if you'll whip up.' And my horse is not a good one."

Bezsonov, without noticing how much, thrust a handful of change into his hand and ran up the broad staircase of the restaurant. The porter, when taking off his coat, said:

"Alexis Alexeyevitch, some one is waiting for you."

"Who is it?"

"A lady whom we don't know."

Bezsonov, with his head raised high and staring before him with glassy eyes, walked across the low hall, which was packed with people, to his own little table. The maitre d'hôtel, Loskutkin, a gentle old man, leant over the tablecloth and observed that there was a good leg of mutton today, but Bezsonov said:

"I don't want anything to eat. Give me some white wine. The kind I like."

He sat straight and severe, his hands on the tablecloth. At that hour and in that place there descended on him his habitual condition of gloomy inspiration. All the impressions of the day seemed to link them-

selves into one harmonious, comprehensive form and, into the very depths of him, moved as he was by the wail of the Rumanian fiddler, the scent of the women's perfumes, the hot atmosphere of the crowded hall, there entered that spirit emanating from outward forms—the spirit of inspiration. With some blind inner sense he felt himself penetrate to the mysterious meaning of things and words—a laughing face in tears by the lamp-post, the music, the sensuous ecstasy of this dark night, the fantastic wanderings of the prophet Elijah (Uri Davidovitch Aliseyev, the publicist and sociologist, to whom Akundin had taken him that day) and all the strange comparisons and examples and laughter at the street corner by the lamp-post.

Bezsonov raised his glass and drank the wine without opening his lips. His heart beat evenly. There was an unutterable sense of pleasure in feeling the whole of himself penetrated by sounds and voices.

At the table opposite, beneath the mirror, there were supping together Sapojkov, Antoshka Arnoldov, a gaunt individual with tragic eyes, and Elisaveta Kievna. Yesterday she had written Bezsonov a long letter appointing a meeting with him here and now she was sitting flushed and excited. She wore a dress of some striped material of black and yellow and the same kind of band in her hair. When Bezsonov came in, she felt suffocated. Sapojkov said:

"I bet you are afraid."

"Be careful," Arnoldov whispered with a broad smile, exposing his rotten and golden teeth, "he has left his actress; he has no woman now and is as dangerous as a tiger."

Elisaveta Kievna laughed, shaking the striped ribbon in her hair and walked over between the tables to Bez-

sonov. Every one looked at her and chairs were moved to make way for her.

Lately Elisaveta Kievna's life had been very dull. Day followed day with nothing to do, with no hope in the future—she was in despair. Teliegin plainly did not love her. He treated her kindly, but avoided seeing her alone. In desperation she knew that it was he that she wanted. When she heard his voice in the corridor, Elisaveta Kievna raised her eyes from her book and fixed them on the door. He walked along the corridor on tiptoe as usual. She waited, the beating of her heart ceasing, the door swimming before her eyes, but again he had gone past. If only he had knocked and asked for some matches. Besides, it was all so senselessly humiliating.

A few days ago, to spite Jirov, who with cat-like caution abused everything on earth, she bought Bezsonov's book, the pages of which she cut with some curling tongs. She read it through several times, upset some coffee over it, crumpled the pages in bed and at dinner announced that Bezsonov was a genius. . . . Teliegin's lodgers were shocked. Sapojkov said that Bezsonov was a fungus growing on the decomposing body of the bourgeoisie. The veins on Jirov's forehead stood out. He said:

"It seems to me that you don't sufficiently understand the kind of poetry it is. It is weak and without backbone."

The artist, Valet, flung down his fork. Only Teliegin remained unconcerned. Then she experienced what she called "a moment of self-provocation." She laughed and went into her room, wrote Bezsonov an enthusiastic, ridiculous letter, in which she asked to see him, returned to the dining-room and silently threw the letter

on the table. The lodgers read the letter aloud and discussed it for a long time. Teliegin said:

"It's very boldly written."

Then Elisaveta Kievna sent the cook to post it and felt that she was making headlong for the abyss.

As she now approached Bezsonov, Elisaveta Kievna said resolutely, "I wrote to you. You have come. Thank you."

And she immediately sat down opposite him, sideways; she crossed her legs, rested her elbow on the table and began to stare at him with her pencilled eyes. He was silent. Loskutkin put down a second glass and poured out some wine for Elisaveta Kievna. She said:

"You will, no doubt, ask why I wanted to see you."

"I will not ask. Have some wine."

"You are right. I have nothing to tell you. You live, Bezsonov, and I do not. If I had the money I would race over Europe in a motor-car until I had fallen down an abyss. To put it shortly, I am bored."

"What do you do?"

"I was asked to join the party to carry out acts of terrorism, but I hate discipline. I'm too squeamish to become a courtesan, and as for some useful occupation, I would sooner hang myself. What can one do just now when everything is decaying and rotting? I do nothing. Are you horrified? Disgusted? I ask you, what shall I do?"

"People like you will have to wait a bit," he replied, holding his glass up to the light. "The time is coming soon, very soon, when thousands of fossilized chimeras like you will flock to get their prey. You have the eyes of a chimera." And he slowly sucked the wine through his teeth.

Elisaveta Kievna did not quite understand what he meant, but she flushed with pleasure. Feeling a ready listener in her, Bezsonov's "style" changed automatically. He resolved to indulge in the pleasure of casting a charm over this woman, so pacified by his attention, of enveloping her in the obscure fog of fantasy. He spoke of the night descending on Russia that would bring fulfillment and a terrible reckoning. He could see this by mysterious and sinister signs. On the hoardings and on the walls of the houses, in the form of trade advertisements, the image of the devil had begun to appear. Yesterday, for instance, the firm "Cosmos" had posted up a huge poster representing an endless staircase, down which, on a motor tire, flew a laughing devil, flaming red, like blood. And on a hoarding in Denejni Street he had seen a poster showing a cloud from which a hand pointed down to the terrible inscription "In the near future."

"Do you realize what it means? There will soon be great scope for you, Elisaveta Kievna."

While he spoke he filled the glasses. Elisaveta Kievna looked at his cold eyes, his feminine mouth, at his raised thin eyebrows, at the slight trembling of his fingers as he held the glass, at the way he drank, eagerly and slowly. Her head went pleasantly round. From where he sat Sapojkov began to make signs to her. Suddenly Bezsonov stopped, turned round and asked with a frown:

"Who are these people?"

"Friends of mine."

"I don't like their making signs."

Then Elisaveta Kievna said without thinking:

"Shall we go somewhere else?"

Bezsonov looked at her intently. Her eyes squinted

slightly, her lips smiled feebly, small beads of perspiration appeared on her temples. He was suddenly seized with a desire to possess this strong, short-sighted girl. He took her large, hot hand resting on the table and said:

"You must either leave me immediately, or be silent. Let us go. It must be. . . ."

Elisaveta Kievna merely gave a little gasp and her cheeks turned pale. She did not know how she got up from her chair, nor how she took Bezsonov's arm, nor how her coat was put on in the cloakroom. And when they got into the cab even the wind did not cool her burning skin. The cab rattled over the stones. Bezsonov leant with both hands on his walking-stick, rested his chin on them and said:

"You said just now that I live. I have lived. I am thirty-eight, but my life is finished. I am no longer deceived by love. What can be sadder than to realize suddenly that the noble steed is no more than a miserable hobby-horse? And there is a long time yet to drag out this life, like a corpse. . . ."

He turned; his upper lip curled into a smile.

"It seems that like you I must wait for the blast of the trumpets of Jericho. How nice it would be if the sound were to break out suddenly over this graveyard and the sky were to turn a flaming red. . . ."

They drove up to a hotel outside the town. A sleepy waiter led them down a long corridor to the only vacant room. It was a low room with a red wall-paper, torn and dirty. Against the wall, beneath a large, jaded canopy, stood a bed, at the foot of which was an iron washstand. There was a smell of mustiness and stale tobacco smoke. A dusty little lamp burned dimly beneath the ceiling. Standing by the door, Elisaveta Kievna said:

"Why have you brought me here?"

"No, no, it will be very nice here," Bezsonov said hastily.

"I am going away."

He took off her coat and hat and put them on a broken armchair. The waiter brought a bottle of champagne, some small apples and a bunch of grapes covered with cork saw-dust, then he looked at the wash-stand and withdrew gloomily.

Elisaveta Kievna drew back the blind from the window. On a bare waste a gas lamp was burning and huge water barrels passed with men on the box, bent beneath the mats round their shoulders. She smiled, walked over to the looking-glass and began to tidy her hair with new and unfamiliar movements. "When I come to myself tomorrow, I'll go mad," she thought calmly as she arranged the striped band. Bezsonov asked:

"Would you like some wine?"

"I would."

She sat down on the sofa, he sat down on the floor at her feet and said hesitatingly:

"You have curious eyes—wild and gentle. Russian eyes. Do you love me?"

At this she was again confused, but thought immediately, "No, this is madness." She took a glassful of wine from his hand and drank it, and instantly her head began to go round slowly, as though she had capsized.

"I am afraid of you, and I shall hate you probably," Elisaveta Kievna said, wondering with a smile at the distant sound of her own and yet not her own words. "Don't dare to look at me like that! Do you hear?"

"You are a strange girl."

"Look here, Bezsonov, you are a very dangerous man. Very terrible. I come from a family of old-believers

and I believe in the devil. . . . Oh, heavens, don't look at me like that! And you don't even believe in yourself. I know what you want of me. . . . I am afraid of you, on my honour. . . ."

She laughed aloud so that the whole of her body shook with the laughter, spilling the wine from the glass in her hand. Bezsonov put his face on her lap.

"Love me. . . . I implore you, love me," he said in a desperate voice, as though at that moment the whole of his salvation was centred in her. "It is hard for me, if you knew. . . . I am afraid. . . . I am afraid alone. . . . Pity me. . . . Love me, love me. . . ."

Elisaveta put her hand on his head and shut her eyes.

He told her that every night a fear of death came over him. He must feel some one near to him, a living being beside him, who would pity him, who would give herself to him. . . . "This is painful, torture. . . . I am quite numb. My heart has stopped. Kindle me. I want so little. Pity me, I am perishing. . . . Don't leave me alone. Dear girl. . . ."

Elisaveta Kievna sat silent in her fear and excitement, while Bezsonov kept showering more lingering kisses on the palms of her hands. He kissed her large, sturdy feet. She closed her eyes more tightly; it seemed that her heart had stopped beating from very shame.

And suddenly a fire seemed to kindle her and ran over her body in a feeling of terror and joy. Bezsonov now appeared to her like a dear child, unhappy and innocent. She raised his head and kissed him firmly and eagerly on the lips. Afterwards, without any shame, she undressed quickly and got into bed.

When Bezsonov had fallen asleep with his head on her bare shoulder she gazed for long with her short-sighted eyes at his pale, yellowish face with the tiny

wrinkles on the temples, above the eyelids and by the mouth—a face unloved, but now forever dear to her.

Such a feeling of pain came over her as she watched him that she wept. She imagined Bezsonov waking and trying to get away from her when he saw her there, fat and ugly with swollen eyes. No one could love her, so it seemed to her, and all would now regard her as an abandoned, silly and commonplace woman. She loved one man and had given herself to another, and her life would henceforth be full of trouble and shame and insults. Elisaveta Kievna wept silently, wiping her eyes with a corner of the sheet. And thus, in tears, she gradually fell asleep.

Bezsonov took a deep draught of air through his nose, turned over on his back and opened his eyes. An unutterable feeling of misery pervaded his whole body. It was nauseating to think that he must begin a new day. He stared for a long time at the metal knob of the bed, then with an effort, looked to the left. Beside him, also on her back, lay a woman, her face covered with her bare elbow.

"I wonder who she is?" He tried hard to stir his clouded brain, but remembered nothing. He carefully pulled out his cigarette-case from beneath the pillow and lighted a cigarette. "Damn! I've forgotten! Deuced awkward!"

"Are you awake?" he asked in a wheedling voice. "Good morning." She was silent and did not remove her elbow. "Yesterday we were strangers to one another and today we are united by the mysterious bonds of the night." He frowned. It all sounded so banal. And besides he did not know what she would do now. Would she repent, weep or give vent to a burst of affection? He cautiously touched her elbow. She moved away.

It seemed that her name was Valentine. He said sadly:

"Are you angry with me, Valentine?"

At this she sat up on the pillows and holding her chemise which was slipping off her shoulders, she stared at him with her short-sighted eyes. Her eyelids were swollen, her full lips were twisted into a smile. He instantly recalled everything and felt a brotherly tenderness for her.

"My name is Elisaveta Kievna, not Valentine," she said. "I hate you! Will you get out of bed?"

Bezsonov instantly got out from under the bedclothes and somehow or other put on his clothes behind the canopy, by the dirty washstand. He pulled up the blind and switched off the electric light.

"There are moments which one does not forget," he said.

Elisaveta watched him with her dark eyes. When he had seated himself on the sofa with a cigarette, she said:

"I will poison myself when I get home."

"I fail to understand your mood, Elisaveta Kievna."

"You are not asked to understand. Get out of the room, I want to dress."

Bezsonov went out into the corridor, which was draughty and full of charcoal fumes. He had to wait a long time. He sat on a window-sill and smoked, then he walked to the end of the corridor, whence, from the small kitchen, the restrained voices of the waiter and two housemaids were heard. They were drinking tea and the waiter was saying:

"Enough she's told us about her village. Russia, if you please! Much you understand. You should go around our rooms at night—there's Russia for you! Blackguards and scoundrels all!"

"Mind what you say, Kusma Ivanovitch."

"I've served these rooms for eighteen years and know what I'm talking about."

Bezsonov turned back. The door of his room was open, the room deserted. His hat was on the floor.

"So much the better," he thought, yawning agreeably. He stretched himself, straightening his bones.

Thus the new day began. It differed from yesterday only in that by ten o'clock a strong wind broke the rain clouds and drove them to the north, where they were heaped in white mounds. The wet town was bathed in fresh rays of sunlight, in which, shrivelling and toasting themselves and falling unconscious, were gelatinous monsters invisible to the eye—the germs of colds and coughs, of bad diseases, of melancholy, consumption and even the half mystic microbes of black neurasthenia—swarming against the curtains in the half darkened rooms and in cellars. In the streets a warm wind blew. In the houses windows were being cleaned and opened. Yard-porters, in their coloured shirts, were cleaning the pavements. On the Nevsky abandoned girls with greenish faces were offering passers-by bunches of snow-drops, which smelt of sweet eau-de-Cologne. In the shops all winter wares were being speedily put away, and like first spring flowers, in the showcases, spring hats appeared and light materials and books of frivolous contents and gay neckties.

The three o'clock papers all had large headlines, "Hail to the Russian Spring!" And several of the verses published were pointed in their double meaning. The censor began to sniff.

And then, accompanied by the shouts and hootings of street boys, the futurists of the "Central Station" group marched through the town. There were three of them—Jirov, the artist, Valet, and a man whom no one knew,

Arkadi Semisvetov by name, a huge fellow with a face like a horse and large veins on his hands.

They were all dressed in short loose blouses of orange velvet with black zigzags, in top hats and monocles on ribbons. Each had a fish, an arrow and a letter "P" painted on his cheek. About five o'clock they were detained by the inspector of the foundry district and taken in a cab to the police-station for identification.

The whole town was in the streets. On the Morsky, the embankment and the Kamennoostrovsky brilliant carriages and streams of people moved along. To a great many it seemed that the day must bring something joyous and unexpected. Some manifesto would be signed in the Winter Palace, or the council of ministers would be blown up by a bomb, or something or other would "begin."

But the blue twilight descended on the town; the lamps were lighted; like precious stones they shone along the canals and streets and were reflected in shimmering points on the dark water, and from the bridges of the Neva, at the back of the chimneys of the ship-building yards, a huge sunset glowed, covered by a hazy mist. Nothing had happened. There was a flash on the Peter-Paul fortress, a gun boomed and the day was at an end.

Bezsonov worked long and well that day. Refreshed by a sleep after luncheon, he read Goethe and, as usual, reading roused and excited him.

He paced the room by his bookcases, thinking, sometimes aloud. From time to time he sat down at his desk and jotted down a few words and sentences. To act as a further stimulant he asked for some black coffee, and his old nurse, who lived in his small bachelor flat, brought in on a tray a porcelain coffee-pot with steaming Mocha coffee.

Bezsonov wrote of the black night that was descending on Russia; the curtains of tragedy were parting; the God-fearing people, gloriously, like the Cossack in "The Frightful Revenge," would denounce God and put on the terrible mask. The gulf was open. There was no salvation. We must take sin upon ourselves.

He closed his eyes and pictured deserted fields, crossed on sepulchral mounds, and shattered roofs scattered by the wind, and in the distance, beyond the hills, the glow of burning towns. Clutching his head with both hands it seemed to him that it was thus specially that he loved this land, his knowledge of which had come only from books and pictures. Deep wrinkles appeared on his forehead, a terrible foreboding was in his heart. With a smoking cigarette between his fingers, he filled four sheets of thin rustling paper with blank verse in a large firm hand.

When it grew dark Bezsonov did not light the lamp. He lay down on the couch, still excited, with burning head and moist hands. With this his working day was over.

Gradually his heart began to beat more calmly and evenly. Now he must decide how to spend the evening and night. No one had rung him up on the telephone, no one had come to see him. He must manage the demon of melancholy by himself. Upstairs, where an English family lived, some one was playing the piano, and at the sound of the music, vague and impossible desires arose.

Suddenly the stillness of the house was broken by a ring at the front door. The nurse slopped along in her slippers. A woman's firm voice said:

"I want to see him."

Then, light, impetuous footsteps stopped by the door.

Bezsonov, without moving, smiled. The door opened silently and a tall girl in a large hat, trimmed with erect white daisies, came into the room, the light from the hall shining behind her.

Not being able to distinguish anything in the room she stopped in the middle; when Bezsonov rose silently from his couch she would have stepped back, but obstinately shook her head and said in the same high, commanding voice:

"I've come to see you about something important."

Bezsonov walked over to the table and touched the switch. Among the books and manuscripts a blue lampshade lighted up, filling the whole room with a soft light.

"What can I do for you?" Alexis Alexeyevitch asked, pointing to a chair, while he himself sank calmly into his desk chair, on the arms of which he rested his weary hands. His face was transparently pale, with blue patches under the eyes. Slowly he raised his eyes to his visitor's face and started, his fingers trembling.

"Daria Dmitrievna!" he said softly. "I did not recognize you at first."

Dasha sat down as resolutely as she had come into the room; she rested her gloved hands on her lap and frowned angrily.

"Daria Dmitrievna, I am happy that you have come to see me. It is a great, a very great honour."

Without listening to him, Dasha said:

"Please don't imagine that I am an admirer of yours. I like some of your poems, others I don't; I don't understand them and don't like them. I haven't come to talk about poetry. . . . I've come because you have worn me out. . . ."

She dropped her head and Bezsonov saw the colour

rise on her neck and wrist, which showed between her glove and black dress. He sat silent without moving.

"I don't suppose you take the least interest in me. And I would like to be equally as indifferent to you, but you see, I have to go through some very unpleasant moments. . . ."

She quickly raised her head and with her clear, grave eyes looked into his. Bezsonov slowly lowered his eyelids.

"I cannot conquer myself, do you understand? You have entered into me like a disease. I always catch myself thinking about you. It is more than I can bear. I thought it better to tell you frankly than to be so stifled. Today I resolved to come. You see, I have made you a declaration of love. . . ."

Her lips trembled. She quickly turned away and began to stare at the wall, where, illuminated from below, smiling with compressed lips and eyelids closed, was the mask of Peter I., beloved by the poets of the day. In the English parson's family upstairs four voices were singing:

"We will die. No, we will fly. In the crystal sky. To eternal, eternal, eternal joy."

"If you will attempt to assure me that you have any kind of feeling for me, I will go away at once," Dasha said with warmth. "You cannot so much as respect me, that is quite clear. Women do not behave like this. But I don't want anything and do not ask anything of you. I merely wanted to tell you that I loved you horribly. . . . The feeling has made me go to pieces. . . . I have no pride, even. . . ."

And she thought: "Now I must get up, bow proudly and go away." But she continued to sit there, staring at the smiling mask. Such a weariness came over her

that she could not raise her hands and she felt conscious of the weight of her warm body. "Answer, answer me," she thought, as in a dream. Bezsonov covered his face with his hands and began to speak softly, as they speak in church, in a somewhat stifled voice:

"With all my heart I can only thank you for your feeling. Such moments, such fragrance as you have brought me one never forgets. . . ."

"You are not asked to remember," Dasha murmured through her teeth.

Bezsonov was silent. He rose and leant with his back against the bookcase.

"Daria Dmitrievna, I can only bow down before you. I am not worthy to listen to you. I have, perhaps, never cursed myself so much as in these moments. I have squandered and spent myself until I am quite hollow. How can I respond to you? By an invitation to an hotel outside the town? Daria Dmitrievna, I will be honest with you. There is nothing in me to love. A few years ago I would have believed that I could still drink of eternal youth. I would not have let you go from me. I would have fastened on the cup. . . ."

Dasha felt that he was digging needles into her. His words were protracted torture. . . .

"Now I can only spill the precious wine. You must realize what this means to me. To stretch out my hand and take. . . ."

"No, no!" Dasha said in a hurried whisper.

"But it is so. . . . And you feel it. There is no sweeter sin than to squander and to spill. That is why you have come to me. Otherwise you would have guarded forever behind your white curtains the cup of honey God has given you. You have brought it to me. . . ."

He half closed his eyes slowly. Dasha, holding her breath, looked in horror at his face.

"Daria Dmitrievna, may I be frank with you? You are so like your sister that at first——"

"What?" Dasha cried. "What did you say?"

"I feared that under the circumstances, it would be too hard to conquer myself."

Dasha jumped up from her chair and stood before him. Bezsonov did not understand the reason of her excitement. He felt that he was losing his head. His nostrils smelt fragrant perfumes and that inexplicable, overwhelming scent of a woman's skin. . . .

"This is madness . . . I know . . . I cannot . . ." he murmured, blindly trying to take her hand. But Dasha tore it back and ran away. On the threshold she looked back with wild eyes, then disappeared. The front door banged. Bezsonov walked slowly to the table and drummed with his fingers on a crystal cigarette-box. He pressed his hand over his eyes. With all the gruesome force of his imagination it seemed to him that the White Order, making ready for a decisive battle, had sent this spirited, gentle, alluring girl to attract him, to direct and to save him. But he was hopelessly in the hands of the Black and beyond salvation. Slowly, like a poison coursing through his blood, they excited his unquenchable thirst and pity.

VIII

"Is that you, Dasha? Come in."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna was standing by the wardrobe mirror putting on her corsets. She smiled absently at Dasha and continued her absorbed twistings by the mirror, dancing about on the carpet in her tight slippers. On a low little table near by was a cup of hot water, and all about were nail-scissors, files, pencils and powder-puffs. This was a free evening and Ekaterina Dmitrievna was "cleaning her feathers," as they called it at home.

"Do you know," she said, pulling on a stocking, "they no longer wear corsets with straight busks. Look at this one; it's a new one, from Madame Duclet's. The stomach is much freer and is even a little accentuated. Do you like it?"

"I don't," Dasha said. She was standing by the wall, her hands crossed behind her. Ekaterina Dmitrievna raised her brows in wonder.

"Don't you? I'm sorry. It's so comfortable."

"What is comfortable, Katia?"

"Is it the lace you don't like? It can easily be changed. It's funny that you don't like it."

And she again turned to right and left by the mirror. Dasha said:

"You needn't ask me if I like your corsets."

"Oh, well, Nikolai Ivanovitch doesn't understand these things."

"I don't see where Nikolai Ivanovitch comes in."

"Dasha, what is the matter?"

Ekaterina Dmitrievna stood open-mouthed in wonder. She only now remarked that Dasha could scarcely contain herself, that she spoke through clenched teeth and that there were red patches on her cheeks.

"I think you might stop dancing before the mirror."

"But I must make myself tidy."

"For whom?"

"Well, really . . . For myself, of course."

"You lie."

For long after this the sisters were silent. Ekaterina Dmitrievna took from the back of a chair a camel-hair dressing gown lined with blue silk; she put it on and slowly tied the girdle. Dasha watched her movements intently, then said:

"Go to Nikolai Ivanovitch and tell him everything, honestly."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna continued to stand there, fiddling with her girdle. A lump could be seen to rise in her throat as though she were swallowing something.

"Dasha, have you heard anything?" she asked softly.

"I have just come from Bezsonov's." Ekaterina Dmitrievna looked up quickly with her bedimmed eyes and turned deadly pale. Her shoulders twitched. "You need have no fear; nothing happened to me there. He told me in time that my charms were enhanced by my resemblance to you."

Dasha stepped from one foot to the other.

"I have long suspected that it was with him. . . . But it was too disgusting to believe. You were a coward and you lied, and it seems that you are now resigned. . . . But I tell you I won't live in this filth. . . . Go to your husband and tell him and then disentangle yourself as best you know how. . . ."

Dasha could say no more. Her sister was standing before her with bowed head. Dasha had expected anything but this submissive bowed head.

"Shall I go now?" Katia asked.

"Yes. This moment . . . I demand it. . . . You must understand yourself. . . ."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna gave a gentle sigh and walked towards the door. She hesitated for a moment and said:

"I can't, Dasha." But Dasha was silent. "Very well, I will tell him."

Nikolai Ivanovitch was sitting in the drawing-room scratching his beard with a bone paper-knife and reading Akundin's article in "The Russian Review," which he had only just received.

The subject of the article was the commemoration of the anniversary of Bakunin's death. Nikolai Ivanovitch was enjoying himself.

"Katia, my dear, sit down. Just listen to what he says here. . . . 'It is not so much in his mode of thought, nor in his untiring devotion to the cause that the fascination of the man lies'—that is, Bakunin—'as in the pathos of his translation of ideas into real life, which could be seen in every action of his—in his night-long discussions with Proudhon, in the gallantry with which he fought in the very heat of the battle, even in his romantic gesture when, merely passing through the country, he directed the guns of the Austrian rebels, without quite knowing whom and what they were fighting for. Bakunin's pathos is the symbol of the fury with which the new classes enter the fight. The materialization of ideas is the problem of the coming age. Not the abstraction from the mass of facts, which are subjected to the blind inertia of life, not the withdrawal into the

world of ideals, but a contrary process—the conquest of the physical world by the ideal world. Reality is an inflammable mass, ideas are the sparks. The two worlds are separate and hostile. They must be welded together in the flame of the world revolution.' Just think, Katia. . . . It's as plain as a pike-staff. Hurrah for the revolution! A splendid fellow, Akundin! We are certainly living in a time void of big ideas and deep feeling. The government is only guided by its insane fear of the future. The intellectuals spend their time eating and drinking; it is time to open the windows. We do nothing but talk and talk, Katia, and are up to our ears in the swamp. The people are rotting alive. The whole of Russia is steeped in syphilis and vodka. Russia is like a rotted mass; if you were to blow on it, it would go into dust. We need the self-sacrificial pyre, purification by fire. . . ."

Nikolai Ivanovitch spoke in an excited velvety voice; his eyes grew round, the paper-knife he held cut the air. Ekaterina Dmitrievna was standing near by, her hand resting on the back of a chair. When he stopped speaking and began to cut the pages of the review, she went up to him and put her hand on his hair.

"Kolenko, what I am going to say will cause you great pain. I had wanted to keep it from you, but things have so happened that I must speak. . . ."

Nikolai Ivanovitch disengaged his head from her hand and looked at her intently.

"I am listening, Katia."

"When we quarrelled, if you remember, I said, in spite, that you need not be so sure of me . . . And then I denied it. . . ."

"I remember quite well." He put down his book and

swung round in his chair. His eyes, meeting Katia's quiet, calm gaze, were full of alarm.

"Well, I lied to you . . . I had been unfaithful to you. . . ."

He screwed up his lips pitifully, trying to smile. His mouth was parched. When he could no longer be silent, he said in a hoarse voice:

"You have done well to tell me . . . Thank you, Katia."

She took his hand, touched it with her lips and pressed it against her breast. But the hand slipped away and she made no attempt to keep it. Then Ekaterina Dmitrievna sank softly on the carpet and put her head on the leather arm of the chair.

"Have you nothing else to say to me?"

"No, Katia, you can go."

She rose and went out. In the dining-room doorway she was seized unexpectedly by Dasha, who embraced her and showered kisses on her hair, her neck, her hands.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" she whispered. "You are wonderful, amazing! I heard everything . . . Can you ever forgive me, can you ever forgive me, Katia?"

Ekaterina Dmitrievna freed herself gently and went over to the table where she straightened a crease in the tablecloth.

"I have done what you told me to do, Dasha."

"Katia, can you ever forgive me?"

"You were right, Dasha. It is better as it is."

"I wasn't right; I only said those horrible things to you out of spite! I see now that no one is fit to judge you. It doesn't matter if we are all miserable, if we all suffer, but you are in the right! I feel that you are right in everything. Forgive me, Katia."

Large tears as round as peas fell down Dasha's cheeks. She was standing behind Katia, a step or two away from her and said in a loud whisper:

"If you won't forgive me, I don't want to live. Anyhow, I don't know how to live now . . . And if you will treat me like this——"

Ekaterina Dmitrievna turned to her sharply.

"Like what, Dasha? Did you expect everything to be as easy and affectionate as before? You must know . . . I lied because I knew that it was only by doing so that I could go on living with Nikolai Ivanovitch a little longer. And now there is an ending to everything. . . . Do you understand? I ceased to love Nikolai Ivanovitch long ago and have long been unfaithful to him. I don't know whether Nikolai Ivanovitch loves me or not; at any rate, he is no husband to me. Do you understand? He may have another family somewhere or he may have no need of a woman, or perhaps he has acute neurasthenia, I don't know. And there you are hiding your head under your wing so as not to see ugly things. I could see them all the time and I knew and I went on living in this filth because I was a weak woman. I could see that you, too, were being drawn into this life. I tried to protect you and forbade Bezsonov the house . . . That was before he . . . However, it doesn't matter . . . Now everything is at an end. . . ."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna suddenly raised her head and listened. In between the curtains of the doorway, standing sideways, was Nikolai Ivanovitch. He kept his hands behind his back.

"Bezsonov?" he asked with a smile, shaking his head. He came into the dining-room.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna did not reply. Red patches ap-

peared on her cheeks; her eyes were dry; her lips tightly compressed.

"You are mistaken if you think that our conversation is finished, Katia."

He continued to smile. "Dasha, leave us alone, please."

"I won't go." And Dasha stood beside her sister.

"But you will go if I ask you."

"I won't go."

"In that case, I shall have to leave this house."

"Leave it then," Dasha said, looking at him with hatred.

Nikolai Ivanovitch turned purple, but instantly his former expression of light-hearted madness appeared in his eyes.

"So much the better, you can stay. Now look here, Katia . . . I stayed where you left me and, to speak the truth, I went through some very hard moments. . . . I have come to the conclusion that I must kill you . . . I must. . . ."

At these words Dasha pressed against her sister and put both arms about her. Ekaterina Dmitrievna's lips trembled disdainfully.

"You are hysterical, Nikolai Ivanovitch; you must take some valerian."

"No, Katia, it is not hysteria this time. . . ."

"Then do what you have come to do," she cried, pushing Dasha aside and going right up to Nikolai Ivanovitch. "Do it! I tell you to your face, I don't love you!"

He stepped back, produced the revolver which had been concealed behind his back and put it on the table. He then put his fingers in his mouth and bit them and turned towards the door.

"It hurts! It hurts!"

Then Ekaterina Dmitrievna rushed up to him, seized his shoulders and turned his face to hers.

"It's a lie! You know it's a lie! . . . You are lying this moment! . . ." But he shook his head and went out. Ekaterina Dmitrievna sat down by the table.

"Well, Dashenka, we have had the shooting scene from the third act. You can see for yourself what a woman must come to with a weakling like that . . . I shall leave him."

"Heavens! Katia!"

"I shall go away; I can't live like this. In five years I shall be old; it will be too late then. I can't live like this any longer . . . It's horrible, horrible!" She covered her face with her hands, then buried it in her arm on the table. Dasha sat down beside her and gently kissed her shoulder. Ekaterina Dmitrievna raised her head.

"Don't think that I am not sorry for him. I am always sorry for him. If I were to go to him now we should start a long conversation which would be false through and through. It seems as if a demon were always between us, twisting our words. To talk to him is like playing on a piano that is out of tune. I shall go away. Dasha, my dear, if only you knew how miserable I feel! I want something so different. All my life I have been aching to love. To love in such a way that every moment, with every thought, with the whole of my body, with my skin, I should be conscious that I loved . . . As I am I hate myself."

Nevertheless, late in the evening, Ekaterina Dmitrievna went into her husband's study.

They talked for a long time, quietly and sadly, each trying to be honest with the other, and not sparing them-

selves. Both, however, were left with the impression that nothing had been accomplished by the talk; they had failed to understand each other and had not been brought any closer by it.

When left alone Nikolai Ivanovitch sat sighing at the table until daybreak.

During those hours, so Katia learnt later, he had reviewed the whole course of his life. The result was a long epistle to his wife which ended in this way: "Yes, Katia, morally we are in a blind alley. For the past five years I have not experienced a single deep feeling nor have I done anything worth while. Even my love for you and our marriage have gone by unnoticed, as it were. An existence petty and half hysterical, perpetually under the narcotic of the deliberate artificialities of our life. There are only two issues, to put an end to myself or to tear the stifling shroud that is wrapped around my thoughts, my feelings, my consciousness . . . I am not in a condition to do the one or the other. . . ."

The family misfortune had come about so suddenly and the domestic world had collapsed so easily and irrevocably that Dasha was too overwhelmed to dream of worrying about herself. What was there in those girlish moods of hers, anyway? They reminded her of the terrible goat on the wall which their nurse, Lukeria, used to show her and Katia long ago. She would take a lighted candle and put her hands together and on the wall there would appear a goat eating cabbage-leaves and wagging its horns.

Several times during the course of the day Dasha would go to Katia's door and knock gently with her fingers, but Katia would say:

"Dasha, dear, if possible, do leave me alone."

During those days Nikolai Ivanovitch had to appear

in court. He left home early, lunched and dined in a restaurant and returned late at night. His defence of an excise official's wife, Zoya Ivanovna Ladnikova, who had murdered her sleeping lover in Gorokhova Street, a student, Shlippe by name, the son of a Petersburg landlord, astounded the whole court. The women present wept. The accused, Zoya Ivanovna, who had dashed her head against the railings, was acquitted.

Nikolai Ivanovitch, pale and weary-eyed, was besieged by a crowd of women at the exit; they threw flowers at him, shrieked and kissed his hands. From the court he went home and had an explanation with Katia in which he showed genuine tenderness.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna, it turned out, had her trunks packed. He honestly advised her to go to the south of France and gave her twelve thousand for expenses. As for himself—this also came out during the conversation —he had decided to entrust his practice to his assistant and to go away to the Crimea there to rest and take stock of himself.

It was really very vague and indefinite as to whether they were parting for a time or forever and as to who had left whom. These poignant questions were kept carefully in the background in the general bustle of departure.

Both had forgotten Dasha. Ekaterina Dmitrievna remembered only at the last moment, when, dressed in a grey travelling costume, tired and wan and sweet, she caught sight of Dasha sitting on a trunk in the hall. Dasha was swinging her legs and eating bread and marmalade, for dinner had been overlooked that day.

"Dasha, my dear," Ekaterina Dmitrievna said, kissing her through her veil, "what will you do? Would you like to come with me?"

But Dasha announced her intention of staying on in the flat with the Great Mogul and entering for her examination, after which she would go to her father's for the summer.

IX

Dasha remained alone in the house. The large rooms seemed to lose their coziness and the things in them appeared superfluous. With the departure of host and hostess even the cubist portraits began to fade and lose their terror. The door-curtains hung in dead folds. The lifeless arabesques of distorted flowers and figures stood out in woeful monotony. Though the Great Mogul, ghostlike, moved about the rooms each morning flicking off the dust with a feather brush, some other invisible dust seemed to settle as fast again on the house.

Surrounded by this accumulation of utterly useless and superfluous objects it struck Dasha for the first time that her sister and brother-in-law, so to speak, nailed themselves to life with these things, filling up the empty places with them, not having the strength or the sticking-power to hold on of themselves.

Her sister's room spoke as a book of what she lived by. Here in one corner stood a small wooden easel with an unfinished drawing on it of a girl in profile in a white wreath. Ekaterina Dmitrievna had seized on this easel in the hope of extricating herself from the general turmoil, but had not been able to hold out. There stood an antique work-table in disorder, filled with unfinished pieces of work—unripped hats, bits of coloured stuff—all begun and abandoned. Equally untidy was her wardrobe, though it showed traces of an attempt at orderliness, which was subsequently abandoned. And all over the place were flung and thrust half cut books

on Yoga, popular lectures on anthroposophy, poetry, novels. What many fruitless endeavours to begin a virtuous life! On the dressing table Dasha found a silver-cased memorandum block on which was jotted: "24 chemises, 8 slips, 8 lace slips. . . . Tickets for the Vedrinskys for 'Uncle Vanya.'" And then in a round, childish hand, "Dasha likes apple-tart."

Dasha remembered that the apple-tart was never bought. She felt so sorry for her sister that the tears came. Affectionate and kindly, too gentle for this life, she seized on trifle after trifle to fortify herself, to shield herself from destruction, but there was nothing and no one to help her.

Dasha rose early and sat down at her books. The result of her examination was good in almost everything. To the telephone, which kept on ringing incessantly in the study, she would send the Great Mogul, who invariably said, "The Master and the Mistress have gone away; the young lady cannot come to the telephone."

On many occasions the whole evening long Dasha would play the piano. Music did not excite her as before; it no longer aroused vague desires in her, nor made the heart tremble strangely. Sitting quietly and solemnly at her music-book with a candle on either side of it, Dasha seemed to purify herself with the majestic sounds that penetrated into every corner of that iniquitous house.

Sometimes during the music small foes would appear—uninvited recollections. Dasha would drop her hands and frown. And the house would grow so still that the guttering of the candles could be heard. Then Dasha would sigh deeply and once more her fingers forcefully touched the keys and the small foes, like dust and leaves driven by the wind, fled from the big

room somewhere into the dark corridor, behind wardrobes and cardboard boxes. . . . She had finished forever with the Dasha who had rung Bezsonov's bell ten days ago and had spoken those spiteful words to defenceless Katia. The crude, half-crazy girl had nearly done great harm. What an extraordinary thing it was! As if love were the only thing in the world. And it had not been love even, but mere curiosity, stimulated by the general turmoil of life in the house which was her home.

At eleven o'clock, Dasha closed the piano, blew out the candles and went to bed. It was all done in a resolute and business-like manner. It was in these days that she decided to begin an independent life as soon as possible, to earn her own living and get Katia to come and live with her. She would surround her sister with such loving care that never again would she have need to weep in sorrow.

At the end of May, after the examinations, Dasha went to her father, by way of Rininsk, along the Volga. She went straight from the train on board a white steamer, brilliantly illuminated in the dark night and black water, unpacked her things in a clean little cabin, reflecting that the independent life had not begun so badly, and, with her head on her elbow and smiling with pleasure, she fell asleep, lulled by the measured throbbing of the engines.

She was awakened by heavy footsteps and running about on deck. Through the Venetian shutters the sunlight streamed in, playing in liquid rays on the mahogany wash-stand. The breeze, which caught the canvas blinds, smelt of honey flowers and wormwood. She opened the shutters. The ship stood near a deserted shore, where, beneath a recent landslide, strewn with

roots and clumps of earth, was a low bank, on which were some loads of pine boxes. A chestnut foal, sprawling with its thin legs and thick knees, was drinking by the water. On the bank, in the form of a large red cross, the lighthouse beacon stuck out. Dasha jumped down from her berth and putting a tub on the floor, she filled a sponge with water and squeezed it over herself. It made her shiver so with cold that she huddled her knees to her chest. Then she put on some white stockings, a white dress and white cap, which had all been prepared overnight and sat on her with a severe smartness, and feeling independent, composed and frightfully happy, she went on deck.

Liquid reflections of the sun danced about the whole of the white ship; it was painful to look at the water; the river shimmered and shone. On the further bank, hilly and wooded, old belfries, belted by silver birches, gleamed white.

When the ship left the shore and making a circle steamed away down the river, coming to meet it were the banks of meadows and bare places and hills and woods and patches of various coloured green and stone.

From among the hills, looking as though they were tumbling over, the thatched roofs of cottages could be seen here and there. In the sky heaped clouds with blue bases cast white shadows in the blue and yellow depths of the river.

Dasha was sitting in a wicker chair, one leg crossed over the other, embracing her knee. The sparkling curves of the river, the clouds and their white reflections, the birch-covered hills, the meadows and gusts of wind, which now smelt of swamp grasses, now of dry ploughed earth, of clover and wormwood, seemed to go

through and through her and filled her heart with a gentle triumph.

Some man came up and stood sideways by the railing. He appeared to be staring at her. Dasha forgot his existence now and again, but he still stood there. She took a firm resolve not to turn round, but being too hot-tempered to endure it calmly, she turned round sharply and angrily. Before her stood Teliegin, his hand on a rail, unable to make up his mind to approach her, to speak or to go away. Dasha laughed unexpectedly; he made her think vaguely of something pleasant and good. And the whole of the man, clumsy and strong and shy, seemed like a fitting completion to the beautiful river calm. She extended her hand. After exchanging greetings, Teliegin said:

"I saw you come on board. We travelled in the same carriage from Petersburg, but I didn't want to bother you; you looked so worried . . . I'm not in the way, am I?"

"Do sit down." She moved a chair for him. "I am going to my father's. Where are you going?"

"To tell the truth, I don't know yet. For the time being I am going to Kineshma, to my people."

Teliegin sat down beside her and took off his hat. His eyebrows moved; wrinkles appeared on his forehead. With eyes half closed he looked at the water, a foaming track cut by the ship. Above it, like midges, keen-winged gulls sought for food, dashing down on the water, flying up with hoarse, pitiful cries, and left far behind, circled and fought about a floating crust.

"What a nice day it is, Daria Dmitrievna," Teliegin said.

"What a day, indeed, Ivan Ilyitch! On my word, I sit here wondering how I have come out of hell alive.

Do you remember our conversation in the street?"

"I remember every word of it, Daria Dmitrievna."

"Since then terrible things have happened. I will tell you all about it some day." She shook her head pensively. "You seemed to me to be the only sane man in Petersburg. That is why I like being with you." She smiled gently and put her hand on his sleeve. Ivan Ilyitch's eyelids twitched nervously and his lips compressed. "I trust you absolutely, Ivan Ilyitch. You are very strong, aren't you?"

"Far from it."

"And reliable." Dasha felt all her thoughts to be kindly and straightforward and loving and that Ivan Ilyitch's must likewise be good and true and strong. There was a special joy in being able to express freely and frankly all the bright emotions that filled her heart. "I believe, Ivan Ilyitch, that if you were to love, it would be in a manly way, tenderly and truly. And if you wanted something you would not let it go."

Ivan Ilyitch did not reply. He slowly pulled a piece of bread out of his pocket and began to throw it to the birds. A flock of white sea-gulls with excited cries made a dash to catch the crumbs. Dasha and Ivan Ilyitch walked over to the side of the ship.

"Throw a piece to that one," Dasha said, "it looks hungry."

Teliegin threw the remaining piece of bread high in the air. A fat sea-gull with a large head glided on motionless wings, split in two like a skin, then shook them, and instantly a dozen others dived after the falling piece of bread to the water, which rushed from beneath the ship in a warm foam. Dasha said:

"Do you know the kind of woman I would like to be? I should like to give up bothering about myself. Whom

did I love and worry about? No one but myself. I was restless and stifled and miserable. I should like to be the kind of woman who wears a spotlessly clean apron and is over head and ears happily in love, and I want my life to feel like running barefoot over the dewy ground. I shall finish my course next year and I hope to earn lots of money and have Katia to live with me. I am going to be a different person. You will see, Ivan Ilyitch. You won't despise me any more."

While she spoke Teliegin frowned and tried to contain himself, but at last he opened his mouth, showing a set of strong white teeth, and laughed aloud so heartily that his lashes grew wet. Dasha flushed with annoyance, but involuntarily her chin, too, began to dance, and she laughed with Teliegin, without in the least knowing what she was laughing at.

"Daria Dmitrievna," he said at last, "you are wonderful. . . . At first I was mortally afraid of you. . . . But you are really wonderful. . . ."

"What an idea! Let us go to lunch," Dasha said angrily.

"With pleasure."

Ivan Ilyitch ordered a table to be placed on deck and began to study the wine-list, anxiously stroking his clean-shaven chin.

"What would you say to a bottle of light white wine, Daria Dmitrievna?"

"I should enjoy a little."

"Chablis or Barsac?"

Dasha replied in an equally business-like way.

"I don't mind which."

"In that case let us have something sparkling."

Past them floated the hilly bank with its silky green rows of wheat and green-blue rye, and pink flowering

buckwheat. Round a bend, above clay cliffs and rubbish, beneath their hats of straw, stood dwarfed little huts with glittering windows. Further on were ten crosses or so of the village cemetery and a six-winged mill with a broken side. A crowd of boys were running after the ship along the bank, throwing stones, which barely reached as far as the water. The ship turned. On the deserted bank was a low bush with some kites on it.

A gust of warm wind blew under the tablecloth and under Dasha's dress. The golden wine in large, cut glasses seemed like a gift of the gods. Dasha remarked that she envied Ivan Ilyitch. He had his own work to do, was sure of life, while she had to pore for another eighteen months over her books with the additional misfortune of being a woman.

Teliegin replied, laughing:

"They have turned me out of the Obukhovsky works."

"You don't mean it!"

"I had twenty-four hours in which to clear out. I shouldn't have been on the ship otherwise. Haven't you heard what has happened at the works?"

"No."

"I got off cheaply. Yes . . ." He stopped and rested his elbows on the table. "You've no idea how stupidly and inefficiently everything is done with us. The devil knows how we get our reputation, we Russians. It's a shame and a disgrace to think of it. Here we are, a capable people with a rich country, and how far do we see? About as far as the cheeky, grimy face of an office clerk. Instead of life we get ink and paper. You can't think how much ink and paper we make. Since they started writing about Peter the Great they haven't been able to stop. And there can be blood in ink, you know."

Ivan Ilyitch moved away his glass of wine and lighted a cigarette. He was evidently reluctant to continue.

"But what is the use of thinking about it? We must hope that some day things will be better, no worse than with other people."

The whole of the day Dasha spent on deck. To a stranger it would have seemed that they talked the merest nonsense, but that was because they spoke in code. The most ordinary words, mysteriously and incomprehensibly, assumed a double meaning. When Dasha with a motion of her eyes towards a short plump girl with round, surprised-looking eyes and no brows and her pink scarf blowing out behind her round-shouldered back and the second mate of the ship walking intently beside her, remarked, "Observe, the affair is going splendidly, Ivan Ilyitch," what she really meant was, "If that had been you and I, things wouldn't have gone quite so smoothly." Neither of them could honestly have remembered what each had said, but Ivan Ilyitch was left with the impression that Dasha was more clever, subtle and observant than himself and to Dasha it seemed that Ivan Ilyitch was kinder, better and a thousand times more intelligent than she was.

Dasha tried to collect her courage on several occasions to tell him about Bezsonov, but changed her mind. The sun scorched her knees, the wind, as with round caressing fingers, touched her cheeks, her shoulders, her neck, and the flapping flag on the front of the ship, the rope railing of the sides, the sparkling grey deck all seemed to float with her and Ivan Ilyitch among the clouds, past the low, gentle banks. Dasha thought:

"I will tell him tomorrow. When it rains, I will tell him."

Dasha, who, like most women, was a keen observer, at the end of the day knew more or less everything about their fellow passengers. To Ivan Ilyitch it seemed almost miraculous.

She decided that the rector of the Petersburg University, a morose-looking man in smoked spectacles and an Inverness cape, must be a sharper, and though Ivan Ilyitch knew that he was the rector of the Petersburg University, he also began to entertain suspicions about him. On the whole his ideas of reality were a little shaken that day. He felt dazed or in a waking dream and now and again was unable to contain the onrush of a feeling of love towards everything that he saw and heard about him. He would gaze around and think how delightful it would be to throw oneself into the water after that girl with the bobbed hair if she were to bend still lower over the side with the crumbs she was throwing to the birds and fall in.

At one o'clock at night such a sudden and delightful feeling of sleepiness came over Dasha that she could hardly walk to her cabin. Bidding him good night by the door, she said with a yawn:

"Good-bye; mind you keep a lookout for that sharper."

Ivan Ilyitch instantly went into the first-class smoking-room, where the rector, who suffered from insomnia, was reading a book of Dumas's. He watched him for some time thinking what an excellent man he appeared, even though he was a sharper. He returned to the brightly illuminated corridor, which smelt of machinery and varnished wood and Dasha's perfumes. He walked past her door on tiptoe and once in his own cabin threw himself on his back on the bunk and closed his eyes. He was agitated and filled with sounds and

perfumes and the heat of the sun, but above it all he felt an incomprehensible, poignant sadness.

At seven o'clock he was awakened by the ship's siren. They had reached Kineshma. Ivan Ilyitch dressed hastily and peered out into the corridor. All the doors were closed; every one was still asleep. Dasha, too, slept. "I must get off here, or it will be damned awkward," Ivan Ilyitch thought, and went on deck. He looked at Kineshma, reached so inconveniently soon, at its steep high bank and its wooden steps and its medley of tumble-down wooden houses and roofs and fences, at the yellow-green limes of the town garden, so bright in the early morning, and at the clouds of dust hanging motionless above the carts moving down the slope. A broad-faced sailor, treading with firm, bare feet along the deck, appeared with Teliegin's brown trunk. . . .

"No, no, take it back; I've changed my mind," Ivan Ilyitch said excitedly. "I've decided to go on to Nijni. I find I needn't go to Kineshma. Put it there under the bunk. Thank you."

Ivan Ilyitch remained in his cabin for three hours trying to make up his mind how to explain to Dasha what he considered a vulgar and intrusive thing to do. It was clear that he could not explain it; he could neither lie nor tell the truth.

At eleven o'clock, contrite, hating and despising himself, he appeared on deck, his hands behind his back, his gait jaunty, his face deceitful; looking for all the world like some bounder. But when he had gone all over the deck and not been able to find Dasha, he grew alarmed and searched for her everywhere. Dasha was nowhere to be found. His mouth grew parched. Something had evidently happened. But suddenly he came upon her. Dasha was sitting in the same spot as yes-

terday, in a wicker chair, sad and quiet. On her lap was a book and a pear. She slowly turned her head towards him; her eyes opened wide as though with fear and filled with joy; the colour rose on her cheeks; the pear rolled from her lap.

"You here? Didn't you get off?" she asked softly.

Ivan Ilyitch swallowed his emotion, sat down beside her and said in a hoarse voice:

"I don't know what you will think of me, but I purposely did not get off at Kineshma."

"I won't tell you what I think of you." Dasha laughed and suddenly put her hand in his, simply and gently, making Ivan Ilyitch's head go round that day even more than yesterday.

X

As a matter of fact this is what had happened in the Obukhovsky works. On a rainy evening, when the phosphorescent sky was covered with wind-swept clouds, in a narrow street, stinking and dirty, with that particular coal and iron dirt with which the neighbouring streets of a big works are habitually covered, there appeared among the crowd of workmen, who were returning to their homes after the hooter had gone, a stranger in a rubber coat with the hood up.

For some time he followed them all, then he stopped and began to distribute leaflets to right and left, saying in a hoarse voice:

"From the Central Committee. Read it, comrade."

The workmen took the leaflets as they walked and hid them in their pockets or in their caps. Of late among the sullen and angered mass of workmen, so jealously guarded by the authorities, through every possible crevice there crept such young people, sent by invisible friends. They appeared in the guise of servants, unskilled labourers, hawkers, or like the present one, in a cloak and hood. They would give away leaflets and books, send forth rumours, explain the abuses of the management, and all would reiterate, "If you want to be human beings and not beasts, learn to hate those for whom you work." The workmen felt and realized that on the Tsar's government, which compelled them to work twelve hours a day and kept them from a full and happy life by this town of dirty streets and

night watchmen, which forced them to eat bad food and to dress in grimy clothes, to live with slovenly women who grew old while they were still young, who made them send their daughters into the streets and their boys into loathsome factories, there had come a judgment in the form of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party. The committee was elusive and invisible. The workmen hated the government because of their monotonous life at the foundry, the Central Committee hated it in a bitter and business-like way. It kept on repeating incessantly, "Demand, shout, revolt. You are taught to be good, that is mere provocation. The proletariat's virtue is to hate. You are told to be patient and forgiving, that is treason! You are not slaves. Hate and organize! You are enjoined to love your neighbour, but your neighbour uses your love to put you to the yoke. The only love that is worthy of man is the love for freedom. Remember, Russia was built by your hands. You alone are the lawful masters of the Russian State."

When the man in the rubber coat had nearly finished distributing all his leaflets a night-watchman forced a way through the crowd with his shoulders, saying hurriedly, "You wait there," and seized the man behind by his coat. But the man was wet and slippery. He wrenched himself free and bending to the ground, got away. There was a shrill whistle; from the distance an answering call came. A murmur arose among the dispersing crowd, but the thing was done; the man in the rubber coat had disappeared.

Some two days later the turners at the Obukhovsky works struck, quite unexpectedly to the management. They formulated demands which were not so serious as insistent.

Throughout the whole factory, which was badly lighted by dirty windows and grimy sky-lights, vague phrases and angry words flew about like sparks. The men standing at the lathes looked curiously at their superiors as they passed; they were evidently restraining some terrific excitement and were waiting for some kind of order.

Old Pavlov, a skilled man, a tell-tale and gossip, who was fidgeting about near a hydraulic press, had his foot accidentally crushed by a red-hot mould. He screamed wildly and the rumour instantly went about the works that some one had already been killed. At nine o'clock the black limousine car of the chief engineer dashed into the yard like a storm.

Ivan Ilyitch arrived at the works at the usual hour. It was a huge structure built in the form of a circus. The windows were broken here and there; long chains hung down from the cranes; there were smelting furnaces by the walls and the floor was of earth. Ivan Ilyitch stopped by the door. He shuddered from the morning cold and bid an amiable good morning to an incoming mechanic, Punko by name, whom he shook by the hand.

They were busy on an urgent order for motor cheeks and Ivan Ilyitch discussed the work with Punko, consulting him in a thoughtful and business-like way. This small consideration gratified Punko. He had come to the works some fifteen years earlier as an unskilled labourer and had risen to be chief mechanic, thinking no end of his own knowledge and experience. Teliegin knew that if Punko was satisfied the work would go quickly and well.

As he went the round of the works Ivan Ilyitch exchanged pleasantries with the moulders and smelters,

in that friendly, bantering kind of tone which more than anything defined their true relationship. It seemed to say, "You and I do the same work and are therefore comrades, but inasmuch as I am an engineer and you are a workman, we are actually enemies; however, since we like and respect each other, we may as well be friendly."

A crane moved towards one of the furnaces, its descending chain clanging as it went. Philipp Shubin and Ivan Oreshnikov, tall, muscular men, one of whom resembled Pugatchev, dark, with slightly grey hair and in round spectacles, the other, Ivan Ilyitch's favourite, with curly beard, fair hair fastened by a strap, blue-eyed and athletic, began, the one to tear away the plate from the front of the furnace, the other to shove a claw into the high white-hot melting-pot. The chain clanged, the pot moved forward, and, hissing and gleaming and dropping bits of clinker, it floated away in the air to the middle of the room.

"Stop," called Oreshnikov, "lower it."

Once more the crane groaned; the melting-pot came down and a blinding stream of bronze, emitting bursting green stars, and sending an orange glow over the canvas ceiling, poured out into the ground. There was a heavy, sickly smell of copper fumes.

Just then the folding-doors leading into the next building swung wide open and quickly and resolutely there walked in a young workman with a pale and angry face; he was in a black shirt and wore a cap pulled low over the eyes.

"Stop work and get out!" he shouted in a cruel voice, looking askance at Teliegin and pulling his black moustache. "Do you hear, or don't you?"

"We hear, don't shout," Oreshnikov said quietly,

raising his head to the crane. "Wake up, Dmitri, let it down."

"If you've heard, then you know what to do; we won't ask a second time," the workman said, and turning sharply, walked out of the building.

Ivan Ilyitch, sitting near some freshly poured molten metal, began to dig the ground carefully with a piece of wire. Punko, sitting on a high bench by the desk at the door, passed his hand quickly over his grey, goat-like beard and said, blinking his eyes:

"You've got to stop work whether you like it or not. The fellows don't care who's to feed the young ones when they kick you out of the works."

"You had better not talk, Vasili Stepanitch," Oreshnikov said in a thick voice.

"What do you mean?"

"This is our mess. It won't be your children who will go hungry . . . You will soon be running to the managers . . . On this occasion you had better hold your tongue."

"What is the strike about?" Teliegin asked at last. "What do they want?" Oreshnikov, at whom Teliegin was looking, turned his eyes away. Punko answered for him.

"It is the locksmiths who have struck. Sixty of their benches were put on piece work last week as an experiment and it happened that the men did not earn as much and had to put in overtime. There is a whole list of demands put up on the door of the sixth building, but they are not serious ones."

He dug the pen fiercely into the pot and set to writing his report. Teliegin put his hands behind his back and

walked the length of the furnaces, then said, with a motion of the eyes towards a round hole beyond which, in an insufferable white heat, there danced and writhed in snake-like coils the boiling bronze:

"Oreshnikov, couldn't we manage so that this shouldn't spoil, eh?"

Without replying Oreshnikov took off his leathern apron, which he hung on a nail, put on his sheepskin cap and long thick coat and said in a heavy bass voice that resounded throughout the building:

"Come away, comrades. Any of you who want to can go to the sixth building through the middle door."

And he walked towards the exit. The men silently threw down their tools, one climbing down from the crane, another crawling out from a hole in the ground, and in a crowd they followed Oreshnikov. Suddenly something occurred at the door. A shrieking, angry voice broke out:

"Writing! Writing! You dirty cur! There, you report about me! Go on, tell the managers!" It was Alexis Nosov, a moulder, who was thus shouting at Punko. His worn unshaven face with the dim, sunken eyes danced and writhed; a vein stood out on his thin neck. As he shouted he banged his fist on the edge of the desk. "Bloodsuckers! Torturers! We'll find a knife even for the likes of you!"

Just then Oreshnikov seized Nosov round the middle and pulled him away from the desk to the door. The latter instantly grew quiet. The workshop was empty.

By mid-day the whole of the works was on strike. There were rumours that all was not quiet at the Baltic and Nevsky shipyards. The men stood about in big groups in the yard, waiting to hear the results of the conference between the management and the strike com-

mittee, which, it turned out, had long been in existence. The conduct of the strike was left in its hands.

A meeting was going on in the office. The management were prepared for concessions. The only hitch now was the question of a gate in the wooden fence which the men demanded should be opened as otherwise they were compelled to plough through the mud for a quarter of a mile. Actually no one attached any importance to this gate, the matter was now merely one of prestige; the management grew obstinate and a long dispute arose. The strike committee placed this question of the gate on the social plane. At this moment, however, some one from the Ministry of the Interior rang up on the telephone to say that the demands of the strike committee were not to be conceded and that until special instructions had been given no conference was to be entered into with the committee. This order so prejudiced the whole affair that the senior engineer quickly dashed down to the town for an explanation. The men wondered; on the whole they were in a peaceful mood. Several of the engineers went out among the crowd and explained the situation to them, perplexed. Laughter could be heard here and there. No one could believe that because of some stupid door the whole of the works should be held up. At last, a big, burly, grey-haired engineer, Bulbin by name, appeared on the steps leading to the office and shouted out to the men in the yard that the conversations had been postponed until tomorrow.

Ivan Ilyitch stayed in the workshop until the evening and seeing that the furnaces would go out in any case, he went home in disgust.

In the dining-room the futurists were gathered and appeared immensely interested in what was happening

at the works. Ivan Ilyitch did not tell them anything, however; he thoughtfully munched the sandwiches which Elisaveta Kievna had placed before him, then he departed to his own room, locked the door and went to bed. Going to the works next day he could see even from a distance that something was wrong. All over the street, groups of workingmen, were standing talking together. Near the gates was a crowd of several hundred men who were humming like excited bees.

Ivan Ilyitch was in a soft hat and civilian overcoat and so no one paid any attention to him. He listened to the various groups and was able to gather that the night before the strike committee had been arrested, that arrests were still going on from among the men, that a new committee had been formed which was meeting secretly in some public-house and that the demands which they now formulated were of a political kind, that the yard of the works was full of Cossacks, and, it was said, they had been ordered to disperse the crowd but had refused and that the Baltic and Nevsky shipyards and the French and several smaller works had joined in the strike.

This was all so improbable that Ivan Ilyitch resolved to get to the office to learn the news, but with the greatest difficulty he managed to push his way only as far as the gates. Next to the familiar porter, Bakin, a sullen man in a huge sheepskin coat, stood two tall Cossacks with their caps drawn over their ears and red side-whiskers. They looked cheerfully and impudently at the unhealthy faces of the workmen, worn from lack of sleep; their own faces were red and their uniforms were smart and they were adepts, no doubt, at quarrelling and sneering.

"These peasants won't stand on ceremony," thought

Ivan Ilyitch and was going into the yard when the nearest Cossack barred his way, and looking at him steadily with his clear, merry eyes, he said:

"Where are you going to? Back, there!"

"I have to go to the office; I am an engineer."

"Back there, I say!"

Then voices were heard in the crowd.

"Infidels! Hounds!"

"You've spilt enough of our blood!"

"Sated devils! Landlords!"

At this moment, a short pimply youth pushed his way to the front of the crowd. He had a large crooked nose, wore a coat much too large for him and a tall brownish cap clumsily thrust on his curly hair. Waving an undeveloped white hand, he began, in a lisping voice:

"Comrades, Cossacks, are we not all Russians? Against whom are you raising your arms? Against your own brothers. Are we your enemies that you should shoot us? What do we want? We want all Russians to be happy. We want every man to be free . . . We want to put an end to license. . . ."

The Cossack compressed his lips, looked the young man up and down contemptuously, turned and walked through the gate. The other one said in a commanding and haughty voice:

"We can't allow any mutiny because we have taken the oath."

Then the first, who had evidently thought of a rejoinder, called out to the curly-haired youth:

"Brothers, brothers . . . You hitch your trousers up, or they'll fall down!"

The two Cossacks laughed.

Ivan Ilyitch moved away from the gates and the surge of the crowd pushed him to the side against the fence,

where there were some rusty cog-wheels. He got on them and caught sight of Oreshnikov, who with his sheepskin cap at the back of his head, was calmly munching some bread. He gave a motion of the brows in Teliegin's direction and said in his bass voice:

"A pretty business this, Ivan Ilyitch."

"Good morning, Oreshnikov. How do you think it will all end?"

"We shall go on shouting for a time and then touch our caps. Every revolt ends like that. They have brought out their Cossacks. With what can we fight them? Unless I throw this onion at the two of them and kill them. Queer devils."

Just then there was a murmur in the crowd and then silence. At the gate an abrupt commanding voice was heard in the stillness.

"I ask you to go to your homes. Your grievances will be seen into. Please go away quietly."

The crowd became excited; it moved backwards and to the side. Some walked away altogether, others moved further back. The talk grew louder. Oreshnikov said:

"This is the third time they have asked us."

"Who was it spoke?"

"Esau."

"Comrades, don't go away," some one said in an excited voice, and on the cog-wheels, behind Ivan Ilyitch, there jumped up a pale, agitated man in a large hat and with a black tangled beard, beneath which his smart jacket was fastened with a safety-pin at the neck. His face seemed familiar to Ivan Ilyitch.

"Comrades, don't go away on any account"; he gesticulated with his clenched fists; "we know for certain that the Cossacks have refused to fire. The management is negotiating indirectly with the strike committee.

Besides which, the railwaymen are at this moment considering the question of a general strike. The government is in a panic."

"Hurrah!" some one called joyfully. The crowd began to murmur and to shout as it surged forward. Men could be seen running up the street.

Ivan Ilyitch sought Oreshnikov with his eyes, but the latter had moved on some distance and now stood by the gate. From time to time his ear caught the word, "Revolution, revolution."

A frightened joyous thrill went all over Ivan Ilyitch. Climbing up on the cog-wheels he looked upon the crowd, which was now bigger, and suddenly he saw Akundin standing about two steps away by the fence. He did not recognize him at first. Ivan Avvakumovitch Akundin wore spectacles, a cap with a large peak and a black cape. With head bent, he was viciously gnawing his thumb-nail. Pushing his way towards him was a man with trembling lips and in a top-hat. Teliegin heard him call to Akundin.

"Go, Ivan Avvakumovitch, they are expecting you."

"I will not go," Akundin bit off a piece of nail and stared with vacant eyes at the man approaching him.

"The whole committee has met. They do not want to come to a decision without you."

"I stay here for a particular reason, that is clear," Akundin replied.

"Are you mad? You see what is going on. They'll begin to fire at any moment, I tell you. . . ." The cheeks and lips of the man in the top-hat trembled violently.

"First, I must ask you not to shout," Akundin said, "and then to go and take your attitude of compromise away with you. I won't take back my word. . . ."

"The devil knows what madness this all is!" said the man in the top-hat, pushing his way through the crowd. To Akundin there walked up the workman who had taken the men off their work in Teliegin's workshop yesterday. Akundin said something to him and the former nodded and disappeared. The same short sentence and the nod of the head were repeated with another man, whom Teliegin did not know. It was clear that Akundin was giving some order. The crowd on the further side of the gate became agitated again and shouting was heard. Suddenly three sharp volleys were fired in succession and immediately there was silence. "A-a-h!" groaned a stifled voice, as though intentionally. The crowd parted and backed away from the gate. In the trampled mud, face downwards and knees under him, lay a Cossack. Instantly a protest arose from the crowd, "Don't, don't!" The gates were opened. From behind somewhere a fourth revolver report was heard and some stones were flung which hit against the iron palings. Just then Teliegin caught sight of Oreshnikov, who was standing hatless and open-mouthed in the very front of the fast dispersing crowd. In his horror he seemed to have grown into the ground with his huge boots. At this moment a rifle shot rent the air like a crack of a whip, another, and Oreshnikov sank quietly to his knees, then fell flat on the ground.

Within a week the investigation into the disturbances at the Obukhovsky was finished. Ivan Ilyitch was one of the people who were suspected of sympathizing with the workmen. He was summoned to the office and, surprising every one, he said some sharp things to the directors, expressed his disapproval of the existing arrangements and signed his resignation.

XI

Doctor Dmitri Stepanovitch Bulavin, Dasha's father, was sitting in the dining-room at a bent, steaming samovar reading "The Samara News." When his cigarette had burned down to the end, he took another from a flat cigarette-case, and lighted it at the end of the first. He coughed, turned purple in the face and put his hand in at his unfastened shirt and scratched his hairy chest. His starched shirt-front and neck-tie were lying beside him on the table. As he read he kept dropping cigarette-ash on the newspaper, on his shirt and on the tablecloth.

The creaking of a bed was heard from the other side of the door, then footsteps, and Dasha came into the room, a white dressing-gown flung over her nightdress. She was still rosy and half sleepy. Dmitri Stepanovitch looked at his daughter over the top of his pince-nez with those cold, grey, humorous eyes of his—like Dasha's—and offered her his cheek. Dasha kissed him and sat down opposite, reaching out for the bread and butter.

"Another windy day; what a bore!" she said. For the past two days a strong hot wind had been blowing. Limey dust hung in clouds over the town, obscuring the sun. These thick clouds of stinging dust blew in gusts about the streets and the few passers-by could be seen turning their backs on it and shutting their eyes painfully. The dust crept in everywhere and one felt it scrunch between the teeth. The wind shook the windows and rattled the iron roof and withal it was

hot and stuffy and even the rooms smelt of the street.

"There is an epidemic of eye disease in the town," Dmitri Stepanovitch observed. Dasha did not reply; she merely sighed. Her father was interested in epidemics and politics, while she, oh God! what difference did it make how many epidemics of eye diseases there were in the town when her own affairs were in such vague and unsatisfactory condition?

It was a fortnight now since Dasha had taken leave of Teliegin at the ship's gangway—he had gone with her as far as Samara—and she had been living with her father with nothing to do in that new and unfamiliar house, where boxes of unpacked books were still standing in the drawing-room since the winter and the curtains had not yet been put up. Not a comfortable corner was to be found; it was like living in an inn.

As she stirred her tea, Dasha, in despair, stared through the window at the whirling clouds of dust. The last two years seemed to have gone as a dream and there she was at home again, and of all the hopes and fears and the many people she had met in noisy Petersburg nothing seemed to remain but these clouds of dust.

"The Archduke has been killed," Dmitri Stepanovitch observed, turning over a fresh sheet of his paper.

"Which one?"

"How, which one? The Austrian Archduke has been assassinated in Sarayevo."

"Was he young?"

"I don't know. Pour me out some more tea, please."

Dmitri Stepanovitch put a tiny piece of sugar in his mouth—he always drank tea with the sugar in his mouth—and looked good-humouredly at Dasha, who was standing by the samovar.

"Tell me," he said, "has Ekaterina definitely parted from her husband? I don't quite understand."

"I have already told you, father."

"Never mind. . . ."

And again he grew absorbed in his paper. Dasha went over to the window. How depressing! She recalled the white ship and above all, the sun, which was everywhere, in the blue sky, on the clean deck; everything was full of sunshine, moisture and freshness. It had seemed to her then that the shining road that wound slowly over the broad river was leading to happiness, that the expanse of water and the ship, "Fedor Dostoievski," and herself and Teliegin were all pouring into that blue, shoreless sea of light and joy which was happiness.

Ivan Ilyitch suffered greatly. As they neared Samara he grew despondent, lost his liveliness and mixed things up, somehow. Dasha imagined they were floating in towards happiness; she felt his gaze on her, like the gaze of a strong man who had been crushed by wheels. She was sorry for him and consequently tender and grateful, but how could she break down the barrier even ever so little when she realized that there would instantly come about that which must only happen at the end of the journey? They would not be floating into happiness, but would be stealing it, impatiently and foolishly. It was for this reason that she was gentle with Ivan Ilyitch as a sister would be and no more. To him it seemed that he would mortally offend her if he even hinted by so much as a word at what had been keeping him awake for the past four nights and placed him in that strange half visionary kind of world, where all external objects glided by like shadows in a blue haze, and where Dasha's challenging

and disturbing grey eyes scorched him and where he was conscious only of scents and sunlight and an incessant pain in his heart.

At Samara Ivan Ilyitch had boarded another vessel and gone back, and Dasha's shining sea, towards which she had drifted, vanished, fell to pieces, and outside the shaking windows, clouds of dust rose up.

"The Austrians will give these Serbians what for," said Dmitri Stepanovitch, taking off his pince-nez and throwing down his paper.

"And what do you think of the Slav question, Kitten?"

"Will you be home to dinner, Father?" Dasha asked, returning to the table.

"Quite impossible. I have a case of scarlet fever in the country at the Postnikovs'."

"You must be mad to drive into the country through this dust."

Dmitri Stepanovitch slowly put on his shirt-front, buttoned his coat, felt in his pockets to make sure that everything necessary should be there and combed the grey hair on his forehead with a broken comb.

"Well, and what do you think of the Slav question, Kitten?"

"I really don't know. Why do you want to bother me?"

"I have my own ideas about it, anyhow, Daria Dmitrievna"—he evidently had no desire to set out on his drive and on the whole he liked to discuss politics in the morning over the samovar—"the Slav question—mark my words, the Slav question is the peg of world politics. Many nations have broken their necks over it. That is why the place where the Slavs originated—the Balkans—is the appendix of Europe. But why, you will ask.

Let me explain." And he bent his fat fingers. "First, the Slavs number more than two hundred millions and they breed like rabbits. Secondly, the Slavs succeeded in creating a powerful military state like the Russian Empire. Thirdly, the small Slav groups, notwithstanding the process of assimilation, are organizing into independent units and are striving toward what is known as Slav federation. Fourthly, and this is most important of all, morally the Slavs represent something quite new and in a sense highly dangerous to European civilization, the type of a seeker of God. And God-seeking—mark my words, Kitten—is a negation and destruction of our modern civilization. I seek God, that is, the truth within myself. For this purpose I must be free, so I destroy the moral foundations beneath which I am buried and I destroy the state that keeps me in chains. Why can't I lie? steal? kill? Tell me? You think that truth lies only in the good. But I will go and kill purposely and cross that most painful thing of all, conscience, and will find truth in despair."

"You had better start, Father," Dasha said dejectedly.

"I will seek truth there"—Dmitri Stepanovitch pointed with his finger as though indicating the cellar, but stopped suddenly and turned to the door. A bell was ringing in the hall.

"Dasha, open the door."

"I can't. I'm not dressed."

"Matrena!" Dmitri Stepanovitch called. "Oh, that wretched woman, I'll wring her neck one of these days!" He went to the door himself and came back with a letter in his hand.

"From Katia," he said; "wait, don't snatch it out of my hand. I will finish first. . . . You see, God-seeking begins, first of all, by destroying. That is a very

dangerous period and contagious as well. Russia is going through that aspect of the disease just now. . . . Everything is falling to pieces, you see, Kitten. When you go out in the evening along the main street you constantly hear some one crying aloud for help. Hotheads saunter about the streets, working fellows from the outskirts and the factories. They won't let any one pass. The police are quite unable to cope with their insolence. They've got no moral sense, and these hooligans, blackguards and scoundrels are God-seekers. Today they behave in this disgusting fashion in the main street, tomorrow they will do it throughout the whole of Russia. And it is all done for the sake of destruction. They have no other conscious purpose. In the mass the people are going through the first phase of God-seeking—the destruction of foundations."

Dmitri Stepanovitch sniffed and smoked his cigarette. Dasha seized Katia's letter and went into her own room. He went on expounding for some time longer, walking about and banging doors in that large, half-empty and dusty house with its painted floors. Then he set out on his drive.

"Dasha, dear," Katia wrote, "all this time I have no news of you and Nikolai. I am living in Paris. The season here is at its height. Skirts are being worn very narrow at the bottom. I do not know where I shall go at the end of June. Paris is very beautiful. I wish you could see it. Absolutely every one dances the tango. At lunch between the dishes people get up and dance and at five o'clock and at dinner and so on through the night. I cannot get away from the music, which is somehow so sad and painful and sweet. I feel as if I am burying my youth, something that I can never recall. When I look at the women here with

their low-cut dresses and their painted eyes and their smart men, I feel frightened and sad. I feel wretchedly miserable. I keep thinking that some one is going to die. I am anxious about father; he is no longer young. The place here is full of Russians, mostly people we know. We meet somewhere or other every day. It is just as if we had never left Petersburg. By the way, some one here told me that Nikolai was very friendly with some woman. A widow with two children and a baby. It hurt me very much at first. Then somehow I felt sorry for the little one. What harm had it done? Dasha, my dear, I sometimes wish I had a child. But that could only be with a man one loved. When you marry you must have children, dear. . . ."

Dasha read the letter several times; the tears came into her eyes, especially at the part about the innocent child. She sat down to write a reply, which took her until dinner. She dined alone, merely touching her food, then went into the study where she hunted among a heap of old magazines and discovered a very long novel entitled "She Forgave." With this she lay down on the couch amidst the books strewn about and read until the evening. At last her father returned tired out and covered with dust. He sat down to supper and to all her questions he replied with monosyllables, but she managed to draw out of him that his scarlet fever patient—a boy of three, the son of the clerk of the court—had died. Dmitri Stepanovitch sniffed, put his pince-nez away in a case and went to bed. Dasha lay in bed with the sheet over her head, weeping bitterly about many sad things.

Two days passed. The dust storm ended in a rain storm. The rain beat on the roof all night and Sunday morning broke, gentle and fresh and clean.

Dasha had no sooner dressed than an old acquaintance called to see her. This was Semion Semionovitch Goviadin, the Zemstvo statistician, a lean, round-shouldered and pale man with a red beard and hair combed over his ears. He smelt of sour cream. He abstained from intoxicating drink, tobacco and meat and was in bad repute with the police. After wishing Dasha good morning, he said, without the least why or wherefore:

"I have come for you, woman; let us go on the Volga."

"So it has all come to Goviadin, the Zemstvo statistician," Dasha thought and taking a white sunshade, she followed Semion Semionovitch down to the Volga, to the bank where the boats stood.

Among the long wooden wharves which were filled with corn and timber and piles of bales containing wool and cotton, there wandered to and fro loaders and porters, broad-shouldered, broad-chested, bare-footed peasants with bare heads and bare necks. Some were playing at heads and tails, others slept on the sacks and timber. In the distance some thirty men or so with cases on their shoulders were running up and down the shaking gangways. By the carts a drunken man was standing; he was covered with mud and dust and there was blood on his cheek. He was holding his trousers with both hands and swearing in a lazy kind of way.

"These people know neither holidays nor rest," Semion Semionovitch observed in the manner of a schoolmaster, "while you and I, both of us clever and intellectual, go out to admire nature at our ease. The cause of the injustice lies in the social structure."

And with an "Excuse me, please," he stepped across a huge, bare-footed, broad-chested fellow, who was lying flat on the ground. Another was sitting on a stump,

munching a French roll. Dasha heard the first say:

"Philip, that's the kind of a girl for us, eh?"

"Too clean. She'd be a lot of trouble."

"She'd be all right when I got a go at her."

Along the smooth, yellow river, nearly a mile broad, among the shimmering reflections of the sun, dark silhouettes of boats moved towards the further sandy bank. Goviadin hired a boat and asking Dasha to steer, he took the oars and began to pull up-stream. Soon the perspiration appeared on his pale face.

"Sport is a great thing," Semion Semionovitch observed, taking off his coat and shamefacedly hiding his braces in the head of the boat. His arms were scraggy and thin with long hair on them; they looked like worms writhing in celluloid cuffs. Dasha opened her sunshade and looked at the water with half-closed eyes.

"Forgive me for my indiscreet question, Daria Dmitrievna. It is said in the town that you are going to get married. Is it true?"

"It is not true."

At this he smiled blandly, which was out of keeping with his troubled and intellectual face. In a thin voice he attempted to sing "Down the Mother Volga," but choked and in his confusion, he began to pull at the oars with all his might.

A boat full of people was coming towards them. In it sat three lower middle-class women in red and green woollen dresses. They were nibbling sunflower seeds and spitting the shells into their laps. Opposite them sat a drunken bounder with curly hair and black moustache. He was rolling his eyes as though at death's door as he played a polka on a concertina. Another was sculling furiously, rocking the boat, and a third

waved a scull in the air and yelled at Semion Semionovitch: "Mind! You there, damn you!"

And with volleys of abuse they nearly barged into them.

At last the boat scraped along the sandy bottom. Dasha jumped ashore. Semion Semionovitch once more put on his braces and coat.

"I may be a townsman, but I love nature," he said, blinking, "especially when it is set off by the figure of a girl. It puts me in mind of the Turgeniev vein."

As they toiled through the hot sand, into which they sank to the knees almost, Goviadin stopped now and again and wiping his face with his handkerchief, exclaimed: "Do look! Isn't this a lovely spot?"

They reached the end of the sand and mounted a low cliff, from whence began meadows with here and there mown grass, which lay in rows, withering. There was a strong smell of clover. At the edge of a narrow ravine, full of water, was a thick hazel-copse. Below, hidden by the wet grass, a murmuring stream fell into another lake—a round one, on the bank of which stood two old lime trees and a gnarled pine with a single branch, outstretched like an arm. Further on, a wild rose bloomed on a narrow crest. It was a spot favoured by woodcocks during migration. Dasha and Semion Semionovitch sat down on the grass. Below them the blue sky was reflected in the green of the leaves, the water in the winding ravines sparkled in the sun. A little distance away from Dasha two grey birds hopped about on a bush, chirping monotonously. A deserted dove kept on cooing in the copse with all the grief of an abandoned lover. Dasha sat with her legs stretched out, her hands resting on her lap, listening to the plaint of the forlorn lover.

"Daria Dmitrievna," it seemed to say, "oh, Daria Dmitrievna, what is the matter with you? Why are you so sad and want to cry? Nothing has happened as yet and you mourn as if your life were at an end, as if it had flown away forever. You must have been born a cry-baby."

"I want to be candid with you, Daria Dmitrievna," Goviadin began. "May I dispense with convention?"

"Say what you want to; it makes no difference to me," Daria Dmitrievna replied. She put her hands at the back of her head and lay down on her back on the grass to look at the sun and to avoid Semion Semionovitch's nervous eyes which were taking stealthy glances at her white stockings.

"You are a proud girl and have courage. You are young, beautiful and brimming over with life. . . ."

"Well, what then?" Dasha asked.

"Have you never had a desire to break the ordinary morality that has been instilled into you by your upbringing and by society? Must you really suppress all your beautiful instincts for the sake of this morality which is no longer accepted by those who know?"

"And supposing I do not want to suppress my instincts, what then?" Dasha asked. She waited with a lazy curiosity for what he would say next. The heat of the sun warmed her body. It was so pleasant to look at the sky, at the sparkling clouds in the blue depths, that she had no desire to think or to move.

Semion Semionovitch was silent, digging his finger into the ground. Dasha knew that he was married to Maria Davidovna Posern, a midwife. Twice a year Maria Davidovna would collect her three children, leave her husband and go to her mother's house across the

street. To his fellow workers in the Zemstvo offices Semion Semionovitch explained away these family explosions by the emotional and restless character of his wife, while Maria Davidovna, in the Zemstvo hospital, explained them by the fact that her husband was ready to betray her with any one you please, that he thought of nothing else, and that if he refrained from doing so, it was only because he was a lazy coward, which was absolutely intolerable, and that she was sick of the sight of his long turnip face. During these family differences Semion Semionovitch would cross the street, hatless, many times a day, and then husband and wife would be reconciled and Maria Davidovna and the children and the pillows would return to their own home.

"When a man and a woman are left alone together, her one desire is to give, his to possess her body," Semion Semionovitch said at last, clearing his throat. "Be straightforward and honest with yourself. Search within and you will find that with all the falsehoods and prejudices there is a burning and natural desire for wholesome emotion."

"I have no burning desire of any kind now. How would you explain that?" Dasha asked. She was amused in a lazy kind of way. Bees circled above her head among the pale wild roses and the yellow dust, and the forlorn lover continued his murmuring in the copse. "Daria Dmitrievna, Daria Dmitrievna, are you not in love? In love, in love, on my honour. That is why you are so sad." Dasha listened and began to laugh.

"Some sand has got in your shoe; let me shake it out," Semion Semionovitch remarked in a peculiarly smothered voice, and took hold of the shoe by the heel. At this Dasha sat up quickly, snatched the shoe from him and struck him in the face with it.

"You blackguard!" she said. "I never thought you were so disgusting!"

She shook the sand out of her shoe, put it on, got up, took her sunshade, and with a glance at Goviadin, she walked away towards the river.

"How stupid I am, to be sure! I did not even ask for his address and I don't know where to write to him," she thought as she descended the cliff. "It was either Kineshma or Nijni. Now you must just put up with Goviadin. Oh, heavens!" She turned round. Semion Semionovitch was stalking over the sand and grass like a crane; his head was turned away. "I must write to Katia and tell her that I am in love." And listening intently, Dasha repeated in a whisper, "Dear, dear, dear Ivan Ilyitch. . . ."

Suddenly a voice was heard. "I won't go into the water! Let me go, you will tear my skirt!" In the water to his knees a naked man was standing by the bank. He was middle-aged, had yellow ribs and a short beard; a black string cross hung on his chest. He was ugly and furious and was silently dragging a wretched woman into the water. She kept on repeating, "Let me go, you will tear my skirt!"

Dasha ran along the bank to the boat as fast as she could. She nearly choked in her shame and disgust. She felt as if she could not possibly survive it. She had no sooner pushed the boat into the water than Goviadin came running up, panting. Without a word or a look at him she sat down at the rudder, opened her sunshade and did not speak the rest of the way home.

In some curious, incomprehensible way she began to blame Teliegin after this outing, as though he were responsible for the dullness of this sun-baked, dusty, provincial town with its stinking fences and its sordid

wooden doorsteps, its box-like houses of bricks, its telegraph and telephone poles in place of trees, its heavy, sultry noons, when an ugly woman with some stale fish strung on a pole would walk down the greyish white broiling streets and peer in at the windows calling "Fish, fish!" and a hungry, half wild mongrel dog would come up and sniff at them, and the excruciating strains of a barrel organ could be heard down the street, and when you knew that every one in the town had eaten his fill of pie and okroshka and was snoring fast asleep.

Teliegin was to blame too, because Dasha was particularly sensitive just now to the dullness of this dead place, which seemed to have no intention of making a move even though you ran out into the streets and cried wildly, "I want to live, to live!"

And it was his fault, too, for being so modest and shy. She could hardly take him by the neck and say "I love you." And he was to blame for not letting her have news of himself. He seemed to have sunk into the ground. He had probably forgotten all about their journey on board that steamer.

And to make matters worse, on a sultry night Dasha had a dream, the same dream she had once had in Petersburg, when she awoke in tears, and just as then, she could remember nothing of it. It faded from her memory like the steam from the windows. It only left on her the impression of some terrible foreboding. Dmitri Stepanovitch recommended her an injection of arsenic. And then another letter came from Katia. She wrote:

"Dear Dasha, I miss you very much and every one belonging to me and Russia. I get to feel more and more that I am to blame in my break with Nikolai and in something still more important. I wake up in the

morning with a sense of guilt and go about the whole day with a feeling of spiritual oppression. And then—I don't know whether I have really told you this—for some time past I have been followed about by a man. When I leave the house he is coming towards me. When going up a lift in a shop he is sure to jump in somewhere on the way. Yesterday I went to the museum at the Louvre, but I was so tired that I sat down on a bench, when suddenly I had a sensation as though some one had passed his hand down my back. I turned and saw him sitting a little away from me. Haggard, his dark hair turning gray and his beard looking as if it had been glued to his cheeks. His hands were resting on his cane and he stared solemnly with his sunken eyes. I could hardly find my way to the door. He never speaks or bothers me, but I am afraid of him. He seems to be walking round me in a kind of maze."

Dasha showed the letter to her father. The next morning when Dmitri Stepanovitch was engrossed in his paper, he remarked in an off-hand way:

"Kitten, you had better go to the Crimea."

"Why?"

"You must find Nikolai Ivanovitch and tell him that he is a fool. Make him go to Paris to his wife. However, let him do as he pleases. . . . It is their own affair."

Dmitri Stepanovitch was angry and excited, though usually he could not bear to show his feelings. Dasha realized that she was compelled to go and rejoiced. She pictured the Crimea as a blue, wave-washed, wonderful place. Long shadows from the tall poplars, stone seats, a scarf thrown over the head and restless eyes that followed her. She packed hastily and set out for Evpatoriya, where Nikolai Ivanovitch had gone for the bathing.

XII

In the Crimea this summer there was an unusual influx of people from the north. Along the whole of the sea front there were to be seen smart people from Petersburg with the skin peeling off their noses, who had come with their catarrhs and bronchitis, and noisy, shabby Muscovites with their lazy singing speech, and dark-eyed Kievites, who made no distinction between the vowels *o* and *a,* and rich Siberians, who despised this Russian hustle and bustle. And all basked in the sun and became quite tanned—young women and lanky youths and priests and civil servants and respectable family men. And all lived, as every one lived at the time in Russia—unbuckling their belts, so to speak.

In the height of the summer, what with the salt water and the heat and tanned skins, these people lost every sense of shame. Town clothes were held to be vulgar and women were to be seen with no other covering than a Turkish towel and men who looked like the figures on Etrurian vases.

Amid the environment of blue waves, hot sand and naked bodies that swarmed all over the place, family foundations were shaken. Everything seemed possible here. What the reckoning would be away back in the North in their dull homes with the rain beating against the windows and the telephone bell buzzing in the hall, when each would feel under some obligation to the other —well, was it worth worrying about that? With a

gentle murmur, the sea washed against the shore, caressing the feet and body stretched on the sand, touching arms thrown out and eyelids closed with a soft, warm touch. Everything was easy-going and enjoyable, even the most dangerous thing.

This summer the folly and indulgence of the visitors had passed all bounds. It seemed as though some shaft of fire had shot straight from the sun into the midst of these people one June morning and destroyed their memories and their prudence.

Along the whole of the sea front not a single happy house was to be found. Unexpectedly the most stable connections were broken. The very air seemed filled with love-making, soft laughter and indescribable nonsense, spoken on the hot earth, that abounded in ruins of ancient towns and the bones of dead people. There was a storing up, like the rains in the autumn, for a general reckoning and for bitter tears.

Dasha reached Evpatoriya in the afternoon. From the road which wound like a dusty white ribbon over the flat steppes, past salt-marshes and scattered straw and a tall building here and there in the distance, she saw a large wooden ship against the sun. It moved slowly through the steppes among the wormwood, its numerous black sails hoisted sideways. The sight was so wonderful that Dasha could not help an exclamation of surprise. An old Armenian who sat next to her in the motor-car, said with a smile, "You will soon see the sea."

The car turned by the dam of a salt works on a sandy rise and from thence the sea came in view. It seemed to lie higher than the land; it was a dark blue, covered with long lines of foam. A keen wind whistled in the ears. Dasha pressed the leather case she held on her knees and thought, "It is beginning now."

At this moment Nikolai Ivanovitch Smokovnikov was sitting in the pavilion, which stood on piles by the sea. He was drinking coffee with the resigned stage-lover. Other visitors had come out for their after-dinner rest and they occupied little tables, talking across to one another about the beneficial results of the iodine treatment, about the bathing and about women. It was cool in the pavilion. The wind flapped the tablecloths and the women's scarves. A small yacht passed and some one called out from it, "Tell Lisa we are waiting." Some Muscovites, well-known people, came in a crowd and sat down by a large table. The resigned stage-lover frowned and went on explaining the plot of a play he was intending to write.

"If it had not been for the cursed brandy, I would long ago have finished the first act," he said with a thoughtful candour, looking Nikolai Ivanovitch in the face. "You've got a clear head, Kolia, you will catch my idea. A beautiful young woman is pining in despair; everything about her is so ordinary. Her friends are quite decent people, but life has sucked them dry . . . drunkenness and dulled feelings. . . . You know what I mean . . . And one day she says, 'I must go away, I must break with this life and go where it is bright and joyous!' . . . But there are her husband and her friend . . . She is miserable . . . You see, Kolia, life has sucked them dry . . . She goes away. I do not say that she goes to any one else, there is no lover in the story; I make it all depend on atmosphere. . . . Afterwards the two men are discovered in a tavern drinking. . . . They swallow their tears with the brandy. . . . And the wind howls mournfully in the stone chimney like a funeral dirge . . . it is sad . . . empty . . . dark. . . ."

"Would you like to know my opinion?" Nikolai Ivanovitch asked.

"I should, indeed. Now if you were to say to me, 'Misha, you stop writing,' I would stop instantly."

"Your play is remarkable. It is absolutely true to life." Nikolai Ivanovitch shut his eyes and shook his head. "Yes, Misha, we didn't appreciate our good fortune and now it is gone and you and I are sitting here drinking without hope, without any will . . . Your play has moved me very much. . . ."

The puffiness under the eyes of the resigned stage-lover trembled. He leant over and kissed Nikolai Ivanovitch, pressed his hand and refilled their glasses. They clinked, and then, resting his elbow on the table, the resigned stage-lover continued their heart to heart talk.

"Kolia," he said, looking at him fixedly, "did you know that I worshipped your wife?"

"I had some such idea."

"I was miserable, but what could I do? You were my friend. Many a time had I run out of your house vowing never to enter it again . . . But I always came again and played my fool's part. . . . But don't you cast any blame on her, Kolia!" He compressed his lips grimly.

"She treated me badly, Misha."

"Perhaps. . . . But we are all guilty before her. . . . There is one thing I could never understand about you, Kolia. How could you, while living with a woman like that—to my mind one should have talked to her on bended knee . . . How could you have mixed yourself up with that widow Chimiriasova? Forgive my asking, what made you do it?"

"That is a complex question."

"Hardly. I have seen the woman. She is just an ordinary hen."

"But it is all over and done with, Misha . . . Sophia Ivanovna Chimiriasova was just a kind-hearted woman. She gave me some moments of happiness and made no demands on me. At home everything was so high-browed and complicated. I hadn't the moral courage for Ekaterina Dmitrievna. . . ."

"Well, Kolia . . . We shall be returning to Petersburg, Tuesdays will come round and I shall not have your house to go to after the show. . . . How do you think I shall live? Look here . . . Where is your wife?"

"In Paris."

"Do you hear from her?"

"No."

"Why don't you go to Paris? Let us go together."

"It would be useless."

"Let us drink to her health, Kolia."

"Let us."

There came into the pavilion Charodeyeva, the actress, dressed in a transparent green dress and a large hat. She was as thin as a snake and had blue patches under her eyes. Her spine supported her badly, no doubt, judging by the way in which she writhed as she bowed. The editor of the æsthetic journal "The Chorus of Muses" rose to greet her. He took her arm and kissed it slowly in the bend of the elbow.

"What an amazing woman!" Nikolai Ivanovitch said, barely opening his teeth.

"Charodeyeva is simply carrion, Kolia. Why? Because she lived three months with Bezsonov, she now goes about spouting decadent verses at concerts. Look at the size of her mouth. It reaches to her ears and

the veins stick out on her neck. She should have been swept off the stage, as I said long ago. . . ."

For all that, when Charodeyeva, bobbing her hat to right and left, with a smile on her big mouth that exposed her pink teeth, drew near their table, the resigned stage-lover rose, and as though overcome, clapped his hands together and put them under his chin. He said:

"Ninotchka, my dear, what a dress! I can't, I really can't . . . I have been ordered a complete rest, my dear. . . ."

Charodeyeva took his bony hand from beneath his chin. She compressed her lips and screwed up her nose.

"And what was that chatter about me in the restaurant last night?"

"I, speak badly about you in a restaurant? Ninotchka!"

"That is just what you did."

"On my honour, some one has maligned me."

Charodeyeva, with a laugh, put the palm of her hand to his lips.

"You know I can't be angry with you long." And in quite another tone, as though she were playing a part in some imaginary worldly play, she turned to Nikolai Ivanovitch.

"I have just been past your rooms. Some relative of yours has arrived. A most charming creature."

Nikolai Ivanovitch gave a hasty glance at his friend. He took his unfinished cigar from his saucer and made a violent effort to finish it so that the whole of his beard was enveloped in smoke.

"I wasn't expecting any one," he said. "I wonder what it can mean. I must run." He threw the end of his cigar into the sea and ran down the steps, flourishing his silver-topped cane and shoving his hat to the

back of his head. But Nikolai Ivanovitch did not reach the hotel in a breathless condition.

"Dasha, what made you come? Has anything happened?" he asked, shutting the door behind him. Dasha was sitting on the floor by an open trunk, mending a stocking. When her brother-in-law came in, she got up slowly, offered her cheek to be kissed and said absently:

"I am glad to see you. Father and I have decided that you ought to go to Paris. I have brought two letters from Katia. Here they are. Please read them."

Nikolai Ivanovitch snatched the letters and walked away to the window. As she dressed in the dressing-room Dasha heard him rustling the paper and sighing, then all was still. She listened.

"Have you had lunch?" he asked. "If you are hungry you must come to the pavilion." And Dasha thought, "He doesn't love her at all now." She thrust a cap on her head with both hands and decided to put off the talk about Paris until tomorrow.

On the way to the pavilion Nikolai Ivanovitch was silent, staring at the ground, but when Dasha asked, "Do you bathe?" he raised his head quickly, brightening, and began to tell her about a society that had been formed for the reform of bathing-dresses on hygienic lines.

"Only think, in a month of bathing here the system absorbs more iodine than one can take internally. And besides, you absorb sun rays and warmth from the hot sand at the same time. It is not so bad for us men, for we wear only a broad belt, but you women cover almost two-thirds of your bodies. We are going to reform that. . . . I am giving a lecture about it on Sunday and we are also getting up a concert."

They were walking along by the water over the bright

yellow sand as soft as velvet, and flat shells worn away by the waves. Some distance away, near a sandbank, against which a small wave had broken in seething foam, two girls in red caps floated on the water like buoys.

"Two of our supporters," Nikolai Ivanovitch said solemnly, while in Dasha a feeling of excitement and restlessness grew and grew. She felt that she must gather all her forces, that she must let herself go, that she must experience things or it would be forever too late. The feeling had taken possession of her from the moment she saw the black ship moving through the steppes.

Dasha stopped and looked at the water. It washed against the sand and receded and the contact of the land and the sea was so joyous and infinite that Dasha thrust her hand into it. A small crab backed away, raising a cloud of sand as it disappeared into the depths. A wave washed over Dasha's arm to the elbow.

"You have changed, somehow," Nikolai Ivanovitch remarked, half shutting his eyes. "I can't say whether you are prettier or plainer or whether it isn't time you were married."

Dasha gave him a curious look, almost squinting, and with her arm wet as it was, she walked into the pavilion, where the resigned stage-lover was waving his straw hat.

Dasha ate chebureki and prostokvasha and drank champagne. The resigned stage-lover did his best to look after her. He was quite overcome now and again and muttered to himself, "Heavens, how pretty she is!" He brought up some youths—students at a dramatic studio—whom he introduced and who replied to all questions in whispers as though in the confessional.

Nikolai Ivanovitch was pleased and flattered at his "little Dasha's" success.

Dasha drank wine and laughed and ate what was placed before her and held out her hand to some to be kissed, but she kept looking at the rough sea, sparkling and blue. "This is happiness," she thought, but she felt a desire to cry.

After bathing and a walk they returned to the hotel for supper. Within it was brilliant and gay and full of smart clothes. The resigned stage-lover enlarged enthusiastically on the subject of love. Nikolai Ivanovitch looked at Dasha, drank heavily and grew gloomy. And Dasha peeped through a parting in the curtains at the liquid flashes that kept coming and going without. . . . At last she rose and went on the shore. A clear, round moon, like the moon pictured in the Scheherazade tales, hung low in the silver blue void over the scaly path across the sea. Dasha clasped her hands and cracked the joints of her fingers.

When she heard the voice of Nikolai Ivanovitch she walked away hastily by the water, which lapped gently against the shore. On the sand were a figure of a woman and the figure of a man lying with his head on her lap. Further along, among the quivering flashes, a human head bobbed about in the deep purple water, and eyes with the moon reflected in them stared at Dasha and followed her. Still further on a grey-haired man was lying on his side, supported on his elbow. Then a couple stood close together and as Dasha passed them, she heard a sigh and a kiss.

Some one called in the distance "Dasha! Dasha!" at which Dasha dropped on the sand. She put her elbow on her knee and rested her chin on her fist. Had Teliegin come up then and sat down beside her and put his

arm around her waist and asked softly and seriously, "Mine?" she would have answered "Yours."

A grey figure lying flat behind a sand hill, stirred, sat up and with lowered head gazed for a long time at the dancing moonlit path, then it rose and walked past Dasha, dejected and lifeless. With an awful thumping of the heart, Dasha recognized Bezsonov.

Thus there began for Dasha the remaining days of the old world.

Not many of them were left, glad and carefree days, laden with the sultry heat of a burning summer. But people who are accustomed to think that tomorrow will rise as clear as the blue outline of mountains where a party of merry picnickers were going on mules, could not foresee, even the wisest and most sagacious of them, what lay at the moment outside their lives. But above the moment of high colours and satiating perfumes, a moment that was throbbing with all the founts of life, there hung a dead and impenetrable darkness. . . . Not by a hair or a glance or sensation or thought did any one realize what was in preparation; there was only, perhaps, that indefinable feeling that animals have before a storm. It was a feeling of inexplicable restlessness. People were feverish for life. While over the earth there descended a cloud, which whirled madly and furiously into a drooping, sinking mass. And this was visible by a shadow line from the southeast to the northwest which underlined the iniquitous old life on earth.

XIII

During these hot days when the holiday-making population throughout the old world were drowning their boredom in sea bathing, dancing, yachting and love-making, when the more numerous working population were busy creating the milliards of precious things which no one now wanted, when the rural population—the peasants —whom every one passed over and who were not taken into account in any sociological problem—were gathering in the harvest, several wise and cunning diplomatists were at that time carrying on conversations by code. The reason of these conversations was the alleged wish of the government of one of the great powers to have war at any cost, but which government it was, could not be ascertained, for all maintained a stout denial, while the fumes of a burning powder fuse could already be felt.

One had only to find the end of the fuse, it seemed, and the explosion would be averted; it was the more astonishing that it was not found. To all impressions the wicked desire emanated from the German Emperor, but his diplomatists maintained with a clear conscience that it was Russia who wanted war at all costs and that the Russian minister for foreign affairs had done his utmost to prevent a possible ultimatum, and so on and so on. The cause of the obscurity lay chiefly in the fact that the peoples of at least four great powers desired war, not the war we have just been through, but war as a riddance from the hopeless accumulation of things.

For the half century of European peace, state machinery, military and despotic by nature, set itself the task not of increasing every man's happiness, nor of developing his spiritual side in love and good-will, but of making him produce the greatest number of things in the shortest possible time. These things were often unwanted by those who made them, those who caused them to be made, and who acquired them. Man had to adapt himself to the incredibly complex universal factory. He transferred himself into the part of a machine. He had to stifle his good desires and to suppress his vivid feelings; otherwise he would have gone under in the rôle to which he had been assigned. And these feelings and desires became primitive and vicious, and even the few who reaped the harvest on this field of work, became the slaves of things and figures more so than any one else. Thus the new barbarisms, with triumphant song, brought in the nineteenth century and callously and clamorously crossed the bounds of reason and drank greedily of the wine of life, cunningly served up, and grew intoxicated and erected the sacrificial altar and brought up their own brothers and cursed them. And when that mad formula "I am I" was pronounced, the circle was locked and ruin began. "I" disappeared like a fog, and nothing remained but abstraction. And then things appeared. And things became all.

This human degradation was more marked in Germany than anywhere else. The mass of created things there was incredible. People panted under this load of civilization, and it seemed that if the country were not unloaded, the people would perish.

In war there was a double joy, it meant the destruction of things and the escape from the numbered pigeon-

hole into the free fields. War was psychologically desired and therefore unavoidable.

It is only in this way that one can explain the ease with which European governments embarked upon military operations and the speed with which mobilization was carried out everywhere.

Yet during those last days no one knew or suspected anything. Life was orderly, safe and abundant. Millions of people were oppressed—some felt that life was as meaningless as a prison wheel, others that life was vulgar and disgusting like a painted woman who bothers you in the street.

This condition of having one's teeth on edge did not escape Bezsonov, who lay for days at a time by the sea. He peered into faces—the laughing, tanned faces of women with the sun on them, the burnished copper, excited faces of men, and he felt, in dejection, that his heart lay within him like ice. When he looked at the sea, he reflected that for thousands of years the waves had broken against the shore. And the shore, too, was empty at one time, and now it was full of people, who would die some day and the shore would be empty again. But still the sea would be dashing on the sand. He frowned and shoved his dead cigarette into a shell. Then he bathed. Afterwards he dined lazily. Then he went to bed.

Yesterday a girl had sat down near him on the sand and looked for a long time at the moonlight. A faint smell of violets was wafted towards him. A recollection stirred in his torpid brain. Bezsonov turned, but thought, "No, you won't catch hold of that hook, you'd better go to bed," and he got up and went to his hotel.

After this meeting Dasha grew nervous. She had thought that the Petersburg life, stifling and sleepless,

and all the stormy nights, had gone forever, and Bezsonov, who for some unknown reason had kindled her imagination, was completely forgotten.

But at a single glance in the moment when his dark silhouette crossed the moonlight there sprang up in her with renewed force, not a something vague and indefinite, but a fierce desire, burning as the sun at noonday. She longed to feel this man. Not to love him or to worry over him, but to feel him.

Sitting near the window in her white room, bathed in moonlight, she kept on repeating in a feeble voice:

"Oh, my God, my God, what does this mean?"

At seven in the morning Dasha went down to the sea, undressed and got into the water to the knees. She looked round. The sea was a pale blue and only in the distance was it covered with ripples. The bottom was visible and the water kept rising gently above the knees and falling lower. Dasha stretched out her hands and plunged into the delightful coolness and swam away. Then, refreshed and covered with the salt water, she wrapped herself in a rough dressing-gown and lay down on the sand, which was already warm from the sun.

"I love only Ivan Ilyitch," she thought as she lay with her head on her elbow, rosy and fresh. "I love, I love Ivan Ilyitch. God be thanked that I love Ivan Ilyitch. I feel clean and fresh and glad when I am with him. I shall marry him."

She shut her eyes and fell asleep, conscious of the motion of the sea near by and how its breathing kept in measure with her own.

It was a great sleep. She could feel her body lying lightly on the warm sand. Asleep, she loved herself with a curiously agitated love. At sunset, when the flat disc of the sun descended into the cloudless orange glow,

Dasha met Bezsonov. He was sitting on a stone on a winding path that led through a flat field of wormwood. Dasha had wandered there in her walk, but as she caught sight of Bezsonov, she wanted to turn and run; but the former lightness had left her; her legs grew heavy and seemed rooted to the spot. She looked up and watched him approach her, in a manner that scarcely showed surprise at the meeting. He raised his straw hat and bowed humbly like a monk.

"I was not mistaken, Daria Dmitrievna, it was you whom I saw on the front last night?"

"Yes."

He was silent and lowered his eyes, then he looked past Dasha at the darkening steppes and said:

"At the hour of sunset you might be in the desert on this field. About you there is nothing but wormwood and stones. When it begins to get dark, you feel that there is no one left on earth but yourself."

Bezsonov laughed, slowly exposing his white teeth. Dasha gave him a furtive look, like a bird, then she walked by his side along the path. On either side and over the whole field were low-growing bushes of bitter-smelling wormwood. Each bush cast a pale shadow on the ground, for the moon was not yet bright. Two bats circled above their heads, showing clearly against the streak of sunset.

"Seduction, seduction, you cannot get away with it," Bezsonov observed; "it lures and entices you and again you fall into illusion. Look, how beautifully that is fashioned," he pointed with his cane to the disc of the moon. "Throughout the night it will weave its web and this path will turn into a brook and every bush will be alive; even a corpse will seem beautiful and a woman's face mysterious. And perhaps, it is all as it should be.

Wisdom itself may lie in this illusion . . . You are fortunate, Daria Dmitrievna, very fortunate. . . ."

"But why illusion? I do not think it illusion. It is simply the moon shining," Dasha said stubbornly.

"Certainly, Daria Dmitrievna, certainly . . . 'Be as children . . .' The illusion lies in that I have no faith in any of this. 'Be as the snakes. . . .' How would you reconcile these opposite points of view? What is needed? They say love reconciles. What do you think?"

"I don't know; I don't think anything."

"From what lands does she hail? How shall I lure her? With what words adjure her? Shall I grovel in the dust and cry: 'Oh, God, give me love!'?"

He laughed softly, showing his teeth.

"I don't want to go any further," Dasha said. "I want to be by the sea."

They turned and now walked through the wormwood on a sandy rise. Suddenly, Bezsonov began, in a soft, cautious voice:

"I remember every word you said in my house in Petersburg. I scared you. And yet you came like a bird with glad tidings."

Dasha was silent. She stared straight before her and walked quickly.

"But I knew, somehow, that we should one day continue our talk. I remember one keen sensation. . . . It was not your special beauty that struck me, it was the wonderful music of your voice. Once—it was a long time ago—I heard an orchestra play a symphony, I forget whose it was, and from all the volume of sound, one sound emerged, the clear, sad note of a cornet, and it seemed that it must be heard in every corner of the earth. Such will be the voice of the archangel in the last hour."

"Heaven knows what you are talking about!" Dasha exclaimed. She stopped and looked at him, then walked on again.

"A more terrible trial I have never had in my life. I looked at you then, thinking, 'This is holy ground.' Herein lies my salvation; to give you my heart, to become a humble beggar, to melt in your light. . . . Or perhaps, to take your heart and become infinitely rich? Only think, Daria Dmitrievna, you have come and I must solve the riddle."

Dasha got ahead of him, running over a sand dune. The broad path of moonlight, shimmering like scales on the heavy water, was cut short at the edge of the sea in a long, clear line, and over this light there hung a sombre radiance. Dasha's heart beat so fast that she shut her eyes.

"Oh God, save me from him!" she thought. Bezsonov stuck his stick into the sand several times.

"But we must decide, Daria Dmitrievna. . . . Some one must be consumed on this fire . . . Whether you or I? . . . Reflect and answer me. . . ."

"I don't understand," Dasha said abruptly.

"When you are a beggar, wasted and consumed, Daria Dmitrievna, then will your life really begin. Without the moonlight the temptation would not be worth three kopecks. It will be a life of terrible wisdom and a feeling of pride, immeasurably great. And all that is needed is to cast aside the cloak of maidenhood. . . ."

With an icy hand Bezsonov took Dasha's and looked into her eyes. All that Dasha could do was to close hers slowly. A long silence ensued, after which he said:

"However, we had better be going home to our beds. We have talked and weighed the question from all sides, and the hour is getting late."

He walked with Dasha to her hotel, took leave of her politely, shoved his hat at the back of his head and walked along by the sea, peering at the indistinct forms of the passers-by. Bezsonov stopped and turned; he went up to a tall woman in a white silk shawl, who was standing motionless. Bezsonov flourished his stick and said:

"Good evening, Nina."

"Good evening."

"What are you doing here?"

"Just standing."

"Why are you alone?"

"I am alone because I am alone," Charodeyeva said quietly and angrily.

"Are you still angry with me?"

"No, my dear, I have long been reconciled. Don't you worry about me."

"Nina, come to me."

At this she threw back her head and was silent for some time; then she said in a trembling voice:

"Have you gone mad?"

"Didn't you know that?"

He took her arm, but she pulled it sharply away and walked slowly beside him, past the reflections of moonlight that crept along the oily-black water.

In the morning Nikolai Ivanovitch woke Dasha by knocking gently on her door.

"Dasha, get up, my dear; let us go and have coffee."

Dasha put her feet out of bed and looked at her scattered stockings and shoes, covered with grey dust. Something must have happened. Was it that horrible dream again? No, it was worse than any dream. Dasha threw on her clothes and ran out to bathe.

But the sea made her tired and the sun scorched her

skin. As she sat wrapped in her rough dressing-gown, huddling her bare knees, she kept thinking that nothing good could happen in that place.

"Stupid, a coward and an idler. An imagination that exaggerates everything. I don't know myself what I want. One thing in the morning, another in the evening. The type of person I most despise."

Dasha bent her head and looked at the sea. The tears came into her eyes, she was so perplexed and sad.

"A wonderful pleasure is this shore. But who wants it? Nobody on earth. I don't love any one really, and I hate myself. And it seems that he is right. It is better to burn everything, to be consumed and become sober. He asked me to go to him this evening; supposing I do and . . . Oh, no!"

Dasha buried her face in her lap; it was so hot. Plainly, this dual existence could not go on. A deliverance must come at last from this condition of maidenhood, no longer bearable. Or, let the worst happen.

Sitting thus in dejection, she thought:

"Supposing I go away from here, that I go back to Father and the dust and the flies, and the autumn will come and studies begin, and I shall work twelve hours a day. I shall get withered and ugly. I shall know international law by heart. Wear flannelette petticoats. The honourable lawyer, the spinster Bulavina. Very grand . . . Oh, my God, my God! . . ."

Dasha shook the sand from her skin and went into the house. Nikolai Ivanovitch was lying on the terrace in silk pajamas, reading a prohibited novel by Anatole France. Dasha sat down on the arm of his rocking-chair and swinging her slipper, she said, pensively:

"We wanted to talk about Katia."

"Oh, yes."

"You see, Nikolai, a woman's life is very hard at times. At nineteen even, you don't know what to do with yourself."

"At your age, Dasha, one should live without hesitating. If you hesitate too much, you will be left in the lurch. Look at you now, you have grown awfully pretty of late."

"I knew it was useless talking to you, Nikolai. You always say the wrong thing and are so tactless. That is why Katia left you."

Nikolai Ivanovitch laughed. He laid his book on his stomach and put his fat hands at the back of his head.

"When the rainy season begins the bird will fly home of itself. Do you remember how she used to clean her feathers? In spite of everything, I am very fond of Katia. Well, we have both sinned and are quits."

"So that is how you talk now! Had I been Katia I would have treated you just the same."

"Oh, this is something new, isn't it?"

"It is, indeed." She now gave him a hostile look. "You love a man and worry yourself over him and don't know what to do with yourself, while he is quite satisfied and confident. . . ."

She walked away to the balcony rails, angry, not so much with Nikolai Ivanovitch as with some one else.

"When you are older you will see that it doesn't do to take life's reverses too much to heart. It is foolish and does you harm," Nikolai Ivanovitch said. "However, that is the peculiar kink with you Bulavins, to make things more complicated than they are. You ought to be simpler, more natural."

He sighed and was silent, examining his finger-nails. A perspiring schoolboy rode past the terrace on a bicycle, bringing the post from the town.

"I shall go to see the village school-teacher," Dasha said miserably.

"Whom?" Nikolai Ivanovitch asked.

But Dasha did not reply and walked away to her own room. The post had brought her two letters, one from Katia and the other from her father. Dmitri Stepanovitch wrote:

"I am sending you a letter from Katia, which I have read and did not like at all. However, you had better do as you like. . . . Things are the same here. The weather is very hot. And yesterday Semion Semionovitch Goviadin was beaten by some hot-heads in the public park, but he does not say why. There is no other news. Oh, yes, a postcard came for you from a certain Teliegin, but I have lost it. I think he is also in the Crimea or somewhere. . . ."

Dasha carefully reread the last lines. Her heart began to beat fast. She stamped her foot in rage. How delightful! "He is also in the Crimea or somewhere. . . ." Her father, to be sure, was impossible, slovenly and an egoist. She crumpled up his letter and sat for some time at the writing-table, her chin resting on her fist. Then she read the letter from Katia:

"Do you remember, Dasha, my telling you about a man who followed me about? Last evening, when in the Luxembourg garden, he sat down beside me. I was frightened at first, but did not move. After a while he said to me: 'I have been following you. I know your name and who you are. But beyond that a great misfortune has happened to me. I am in love with you.' I looked at him. He sat as though in church, his face solemn and severe and drawn, somehow. 'You need not be afraid of me. I am an old man and lonely. I suffer from heart disease and may die at any moment. And

then, there is this misfortune.' The tears rolled down his cheeks. Then he exclaimed, shaking his head, 'What a sweet, beautiful face you have!' I said, 'Please don't follow me any more,' and wanted to go away, but I grew sorry for him and stopped to talk to him. He listened with eyes shut, nodding his head. And just think, Dasha, today I received a letter from some woman, I believe the concierge of the house in which he lived, and she writes, 'on his instructions' to inform me that he died in the night. . . . Isn't it awful! I walked over to the window just now and looked at the thousands and thousands of lights in the street and the vehicles rolling past and the people strolling among the trees. It has been raining and there is a mist now. It seemed to me that everything I saw was of the past, that all the people were dead, done with. I do not see what is happening just now. I know that all is finished. A man came by and turned to look at my window, and though I am clearly conscious that he turned and looked at me, it seemed that it happened a long, long time ago. . . . I must be very ill. I lie and cry sometimes over my wasted life. There used to be something—it may not have been real—but, at any rate, it was happiness, and then there were people one liked, but now nothing is left . . . and my heart has grown dry within me. I feel that some great sorrow is in store, a punishment for the bad way in which we lived. Dasha, my dear, God give you happiness. . . ."

Dasha showed the letter to Nikolai Ivanovitch. He sighed as he read it and began to tell her how he blamed himself about Katia. "I could see that we lived badly and that the incessant pleasure-seeking would end in despair. But what could I do when the main occupation of my life, and that of Katia's and of all our friends, was enjoyment? When I look at the sea here sometimes, I can't

help reflecting that there is some Russia where they till the land and rear cattle and hew coal and weave and hammer and build, and that there are people who cause all these things to be done, and that we, some third party, the enlightened aristocracy of the country, the intellectuals, have no concern in any part of this Russia. It supports us. We are butterflies. It's a tragedy. Now, if I were to try to grow vegetables or to build a factory, nothing whatever would come of it. I am doomed to a butterfly existence to the end of my days. It is true that we write books and make speeches and politics, but this is also a pastime with us, even when conscience gnaws. This perpetual pleasure-seeking created spiritual havoc in Katia. Nothing else could have been expected. If only you knew what a sweet and charming woman she was! I have spoiled and corrupted her. . . . You are right, I ought to go to her. . . ."

It was decided that they should go to Paris together, as soon as they could get foreign passports. After dinner Nikolai Ivanovitch went into the town and Dasha began to alter a large straw hat for the journey, but she only spoiled it and gave it to the housemaid. Then she wrote a letter to her father and at dusk she lay down on her bed, such a sudden feeling of tiredness had come over her. She put her hand under her cheek and listened to the sound of the sea, which seemed more and more remote and pleasant.

Then she felt some one bend over her, push away a lock of hair from her face and kiss her on the eyes, the cheeks, the corners of her mouth, a kiss as light as a breath. The sweetness of it coursed through the whole of her body. Dasha began to wake slowly. The stars could be seen through the open window and the breeze blowing in fluttered the pages of the letter. From behind

the wall a human form emerged, leant its elbows on the window-sill and stared at Dasha.

Dasha woke up wide. She sat up in bed and put her hand on her bosom, at her unfastened dress.

"What do you want?" she asked in a scarcely audible voice. The man at the window spoke in Bezsonov's voice.

"I waited for you on the shore. Why didn't you come? Were you afraid?"

"Yes," Dasha said, after a pause.

Then he climbed in at the window, pushed away the table and came up to the bed.

"I spent a horrible night," he said; "a little more and I would have hanged myself. Have you no feeling for me?"

Dasha shook her head, but did not open her lips.

"Listen, Daria Dmitrievna, this is bound to happen, whether today or tomorrow or a year hence. I cannot live without you. Do not make me lose all likeness to a human being." He spoke softly, in a hoarse voice, and came quite close to Dasha. She sighed deeply and continued to stare at his face. "Everything I said yesterday was a horrible lie. I suffer cruelly. I haven't the strength to wipe out the memory of you . . . Will you be my wife? . . ."

He bent over Dasha, inhaling her perfume. He put his arms round her neck and fastened on her lips. Dasha tried to push him away, but her hands bent. Then, in her stupor, came the clear thought, "This is what I fear and wanted, but it's like murder. . . ." She turned her face away; she could hear Bezsonov, whose breath smelt of wine, muttering something in her ear. And Dasha thought, "I suppose he was the same with Katia." A cold shiver ran over her body; the smell

of wine grew stronger, the muttering more disgusting.

"Let me go!" she said and with an effort, pushed Bezsonov away. She walked over to the door and managed to fasten her dress at the throat.

Then a fury seized Bezsonov. He clutched Dasha's hands, pulled her over to himself and began to kiss her throat. She fought silently with compressed lips. But when he lifted her off her feet and carried her, Dasha said in a hurried whisper:

"Never in my life, not if you die!"

She pushed him forcibly away. He dropped into a chair and sat motionless. Dasha rubbed the places on her hands where his finger-marks showed.

"I ought not to have been in such a hurry," Bezsonov said.

"I find you disgusting," Dasha replied.

At this he leant the side of his head against the back of the chair.

"You are mad . . ." Dasha said. "Go away."

She repeated this several times. He understood at last, rose and climbed heavily and clumsily out of the window. Dasha closed the shutters and began to pace the dark room. The night was spent badly.

Towards the morning Nikolai Ivanovitch slopped along with his bare feet and knocked at her door, asking in a sleepy voice:

"Have you got a toothache, Dasha?"

"No."

"Then what was that noise in your room in the night?"

"I don't know."

"A funny thing," he muttered, and went away. Dasha could neither sit nor lie down. She could only pace the room from window to door, trying to drown that acute feeling of disgust with herself that gnawed like a tooth-

ache. There had happened a most horrible thing; something that had never been foreseen. It was as if a dog had torn a corpse in the churchyard at night. . . . And she—Dasha—had done this. Had Bezsonov possessed her, she would not have felt it so badly, it seemed. With a pang of despair she recalled the white, sun-bathed ship and another thing, the deserted lover in the copse, who cooed and muttered and lied when he assured Dasha that she was in love.

So it had all ended in this. Dasha felt, as she looked at the bed, gleaming white in the dimness, and saw the spot where but now a human face had assumed the likeness of a dog, that she could not live with the consciousness of it. Any kind of suffering would have been more bearable than this loathing of everything, of people, of the earth, of herself. . . . She covered her face with her hands and thought, "Oh, Father, if Thou art in heaven, save me." . . . But the words had no power to reach Him. . . . Her face was burning; she wanted to tear the web from her neck, from her body.

At last the clear daylight peeped through the closed shutters. A sound of banging doors was heard in the house and some loud voice, calling, "Matriosha, bring me some water." . . . Dasha sluiced her face, thrust a cap over her eyes and went out on to the shore. The sea was like milk, the sand was damp. There was a smell of seaweed. Dasha turned to the fields and wandered down the road. Coming towards her was a rustic cart, drawn by one horse, which raised a cloud of dust. A Tartar sat on the box and beside him was a broad-shouldered man dressed completely in white. She looked at him as if in a dream (her eyes stuck together from the sun and weariness) and thought: "There goes a nice, happy man. Well, let him, nice and happy as he

is." And she stepped off the road. Suddenly a frightened voice called from the cart:

"Daria Dmitrievna!"

Some one jumped from the cart and ran. At the sound of his voice Dasha's heart leapt and fell somewhere low down; her knees gave way under her. She turned. Teliegin ran up to her, sunburnt, excited and blue-eyed and so unexpectedly dear to her that Dasha impetuously put her hands on his breast, pressed her face against him and burst out crying, loudly, like a child.

Teliegin held her firmly round the shoulders. When Dasha, in a broken voice, attempted to explain something or other, he said:

"Please, Daria Dmitrievna, not now. It isn't important." . . . The front of his linen jacket was wet with Dasha's tears. But Dasha felt relieved.

"Were you coming to us?" she asked.

"Yes. I was coming to say good-bye, Daria Dmitrievna. I heard only yesterday that you were here and so . . . I wanted to say good-bye."

"Good-bye?"

"I've been called up. It can't be helped."

"Called up?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"No."

"It's war; that's what it is." He smiled and looked into Dasha's face with a new assurance.

XIV

In the editor's room of a big liberal newspaper—"The Word of the People"—an extraordinary editorial meeting was in progress, and as alcoholic drinks were forbidden by law yesterday, in addition to the editorial tea, brandy and rum were served. Stout, bearded liberals were sitting in deep armchairs, smoking tobacco and feeling lost. The young members of the staff were seated on window-sills and on the famous leather-covered sofa about which a celebrated writer had let drop the inadvertent remark that it contained bugs.

The editor, grey-haired and red-cheeked, a man of English habits, was pronouncing in a deliberate voice, word by word, one of his remarkable speeches that would give the lead to the whole of the liberal press.

"The complexity of our problems lies in the fact that while not receding one step from our opposition to the Tsar's government, in the face of the danger threatening the integrity of Russian territory, we must hold out our hand to that government. Our gesture must be honest and sincere. The question of the guilt of the Tsar's government, which has brought Russia to the point of war, is, at the moment, one of secondary consideration. We must conquer first and then judge the guilty. Today, at this very hour, a bloody battle is in progress at Krasnostaw. Our guards have been thrown into the broken front. The result of the battle is not known as yet, but we must remember that Kiev is threatened. The war cannot last more than two or

three months at most and no matter what its issue, with our heads held high, we shall be able to say to the Tsar's government, 'In a difficult hour we were beside you, now we must hold you to account.' . . ."

One of the oldest members of the staff, a man named Belosvetov, who wrote about Zemstvo matters, unable to contain himself any longer, exclaimed:

"If it is the Tsar's government that's at war, why the extended hand? For the life of me I don't understand."

"Well, really, to extend a hand to Nicholas II., say what you will, gentlemen, but it goes against the grain," muttered Alfa, a leader writer, as he selected a cake from the dish. "It makes one break into a cold sweat even in sleep."

Instantly several voices broke out.

"No, on no condition can we enter into agreement. . . ."

"Is this capitulation, I ask?"

"An ignominious end to the whole of our progressive movement."

"But gentlemen, I would like some one to explain to me the aims of the war."

"You will know them when the Germans break your neck."

"So, sir, it seems you are a Nationalist!"

"I merely don't wish to be beaten."

"It is not we who will be beaten, but Nicholas II."

"But what about Poland and Volhynia and Kiev?"

"The more completely we are beaten the sooner will the revolution come."

"For no revolution in the world would I give up Kiev. . . ."

"For shame, Peter Petrovitch. . . ."

Order was restored with difficulty. The editor went

on to explain that according to a circular on the military position the censorship would suppress any newspaper that made the slightest attack on the government and that there would thus be destroyed the beginning of the freedom of the press, for the attainment of which so much energy had been spent.

"It is for this reason that I would suggest to this worthy assembly the advisability of finding a more admissible standpoint. For myself, I will express the paradoxical view that we must accept this war completely with all its consequences. Do not forget that the war is popular in our society. In Moscow it has been termed the second war of the Fatherland." He smiled subtly and lowered his eyes. "The Emperor was received in Moscow almost with enthusiasm. Mobilization among the common people is proceeding in a way which they dared not and could not have expected."

"Vasili Vasilevitch, are you joking, pray?" exclaimed Belosvetov in a plaintive voice. "You are making the foundations of our faith tumble about us like a house of cards. We to help the government? And what of the ten thousand of our best people rotting in Siberia? And the shooting of workmen? The stones are still wet with their blood. . . ."

The opinions expressed were all excellent and most worthy, but each could see clearly that an agreement with the government would have to be reached, and so, when the proofs of a leader were brought from the printers, beginning with the words, "In the face of the German invasion we must close our ranks in a single front," the assembly silently examined the slips. Some one gave a smothered sigh, another remarked: "So this is what we have come to!" Belosvetov fastened every button on his black coat covered with cigarette ash,

but he did not go away; he sat down again in his armchair and the next issue of the paper was made up with the headline, "The Country Is in Danger. To Arms!"

For all that the heart of every one was full of confusion and alarm. How the firm peace of Europe had come to be blown into the air within twenty-four hours and why the benevolent European civilization, which "The Word of the People" had daily cast into the government's teeth and by means of which it had aroused the consciences of public organizations, had been so completely wrong (printing and electricity and even radium had been imaginary then, and when the hour came, beneath the frock-coat and top hat was the hairy savage with a club), the editorial staff could not fathom; it was too bitter to have to acknowledge it.

Silently and sadly the conference broke up. Venerable writers retired to the Club for luncheon and the younger men gathered in the room of the news editor. It was resolved to make a most minute investigation of the moods of the most varied sections and societies. Antoshka Arnoldov was entrusted to deal with the military censorship. With a hot hand he took an advance on his pay and set out on a fast horse along the Nevsky to the General Staff.

He was received by the head of the press section, a colonel of the general staff, Solntsev by name, who listened to him politely and looked him in the eyes with his own clear, protruding and humorous eyes. Arnoldov had expected to meet some wonder hero, a purple-faced leonine general, a scourge of a free press, but before him sat an elegant, rosy-cheeked, educated man, who had no intention of scourging or oppressing and who did not shout in a hoarse bass voice. It fitted in badly with his general conception of a hireling of the Tsar.

"Well, Colonel, I hope you will not withhold your authoritative views on the questions I have noted." Arnoldov gave a sidelong glance at the sombre, life-size portrait of the Emperor Nicholas I., who stared with inexorable eyes at the representative of the press, as much as to say: "A short, miserable jacket, brown shoes, a perspiring nose, a wretched appearance. You are afraid. . . ." "I do not doubt, Colonel, that by the New Year Russian troops will be in Berlin, but our paper is chiefly interested in certain special matters. . . ."

Colonel Solntsev politely interrupted him.

"To my mind, Russian society has not clearly apprehended the immensities of this war, nor the consequences that must follow it. Of course, I cannot but welcome your excellent desire that our glorious troops should be in Berlin, but I fear that it will be more difficult to accomplish it than to wish it. I would suggest that the most important function of the press at the present moment is to prepare society for the very serious danger that is threatening our realm and for the extraordinary sacrifices that we shall have to make if we are to escape from the undesired consequences of an enemy invasion into Russian boundaries."

Antoshka Arnoldov dropped his notebook and looked in perplexity at the colonel. Behind him rose up the sombre form of Nicholas I. Both men had the same kind of eyes, but the latter's were cruel, while the eyes of the colonel were good-humoured. The large room was clean, severe and monumental and smelt of the centuries. Solntsev continued.

"We did not seek this war and at present we are merely on the defensive. Germany has the advantage over us in artillery, in the thick network of foreign railways and consequently in the speed with which she can

move troops. Nevertheless, we will do our utmost to prevent the enemy from crossing our frontiers. Russian troops will carry out the heavy duty that has been laid upon them. Society must have faith in the high authorities and in the army. It would be desirable that society should also be inculcated with a feeling of duty to the country." Colonel Solntsev raised his eyebrows and drew a square on a sheet of paper that lay before him. "I realize that the feeling of patriotism among certain sections of the community is somewhat complicated. But the danger is so great that I am convinced that all disagreements and accounts will be put off until a more propitious moment. The All-Russian empire, even in 1812, has never been through a harder time. This is about all that I would like you to emphasize. Then, it must also be made public that the military hospitals at the disposal of the government are insufficient to accommodate the many wounded and that in this respect, society must be prepared for extensive help. . . ."

"I am sorry, Colonel, but I do not understand; what can be the number of wounded?"

Solntsev again raised his eyebrows and drew a circle inside the square.

"I think that in the next weeks we may expect about one thousand two hundred and fifty or three hundred."

Antoshka Arnoldov swallowed his saliva, jotted down the figures and asked with a new respect:

"How many killed do you expect in that case?"

"We usually reckon about ten per cent of the wounded."

"Oh, thank you."

Solntsev rose. Antoshka shook him hastily by the hand. He opened the oak door and collided with Atlant, a

consumptive and shabby journalist, in a crushed jacket, who had not had any vodka since yesterday.

"Colonel, I have come about the war," said Atlant, covering his dirty shirt-front with his hand.

"You are welcome."

Arnoldov came out into the square, put on his hat and stood for some time with half closed eyes. "War till victory," he muttered through clenched teeth. "Just wait, you old galoshes, we will teach you to talk about defeat."

About the big, cleanly-swept square with its dirty granite column of Alexander, small groups of bearded, bewildered peasants moved to and fro. Shouts of command were heard. The peasants arranged themselves, ran across and formed into line. In one spot, some fifty of them shouted discordantly "Hurrah" as they rose from the pavement and set off at a stumbling trot. . . . "Stop! Attention! You rascals, you dogs!" some hoarse voice shouted at them. In another spot they were standing in a circle, and some one was saying, "When you run up, stick him through the body; if your bayonet is broken, strike him with the butt end."

They were the same rugged peasants with halos of beards, in best shoes and shirts and with the salt on their spades who, two hundred years ago, had come to that swampy shore to build a city. Now, they had been summoned to stay with their shoulders the tottering pillar of the Empire.

Antoshka turned down the Nevsky, thinking all the while of his article. In the middle, marching to the sound of a flute moaning like the wind, came two companies in full marching uniform, with kit bags and kettles and shovels. The high cheek-boned faces of the soldiers were weary and covered with dust. A little

officer in a green shirt with new straps raised himself on tiptoe now and again and turning, rolled his eyes. "Right! Right!" As in a dream came the roar of the smart, sparkling carriages on the Nevsky. "Right! Right! Right!" Swaying in measure behind the little officer, they walked to death, these submissive, heavy-footed peasants. A black, fiery horse caught up with them, foaming at the mouth. A broad-backed coachman reined him in. A beautiful lady rose in the carriage and looked at the passing soldiers. Suddenly her white-gloved hand began to make the sign of the cross over them and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

The soldiers passed, screened from view by a stream of carriages. It was crowded and hot on the pavement; every one seemed to be expecting something. Passers-by stopped, listened to the talk and shouting, pushed their way through, asked questions, and then, in excitement, went to join another group. All over the place there was a whirlpool of people. A crush began; people crossed the street.

The disorderly movement gradually became defined; people were turning from the Nevsky to the Morskaya. There the crowd walked frankly in the middle of the street. Some short fellows ran past, in silent concentration. At the crossways there was a waving of hats and umbrellas and a shout of "Hurrah! Hurrah!" filled the Morskaya. Street boys whistled shrilly. Smart women stood up in their carriages. The crowd poured into the Isaac Square and began to climb the railings. Windows and roofs were filled with people. Heads swarmed beneath the Isaac columns like ants. And these tens of thousands of people were all straining to the top windows of a dull red, heavy house—the German embassy—from whence clouds of smoke issued. Behind broken

windows people flitted about, casting to the crowd bundles of papers, which flew up in the air and fell slowly. At each volume of smoke and each thing thrown from the windows the crowd roared. At the front of the house were two bronze giants holding horses by the bridle. The busy little fellows appeared about them. The crowd grew quiet; a metallic striking of hammers could be heard. The giant to the right swayed and fell on the pavement. The crowd yelled. The crush began. People rushed up from everywhere. "Into the Moika with them! Into the Moika, the devils!" The second statue fell. Antoshka Arnoldov was seized by the shoulders by some stout lady in glasses, who shouted at him, "We'll drown them all, young man!" The crowd surged towards the Moika. The sound of firemen's horns could be heard; brass helmets gleamed in the distance. From the corners mounted police appeared. And suddenly, among the rushing, shrieking crowd Arnoldov caught sight of the horribly pale face of a man without a hat, who was staring with glassy eyes, wide-open and motionless. It was only by the hair and the eyebrows, that seemed drawn on the face, that he recognized Bezsonov. He approached him.

"Have you been there?" Bezsonov asked. "I heard them kill him."

"Has there been murder? Who has been killed?"

"I don't know."

Bezsonov turned away and staggered down the square as one blind, his hands thrust in his pockets. The remaining crowd rushed in separate groups to the Nevsky, where a pogrom had begun on Reiter's café.

That evening Antoshka Arnoldov, standing at the desk of one of the editorial rooms, which was filled with tobacco smoke, wrote rapidly on narrow slips of paper.

"Today we have witnessed all the force and beauty of the national anger. We must observe that not a single bottle of wine was drunk in the cellar of the German embassy. Everything was broken and cast into the Moika. Reconciliation is impossible. We must fight until we achieve victory, no matter what the sacrifices may be. The Germans expected to find Russia asleep, but at the thundering words 'The Country is in danger!' the people have risen as one man. Their anger is terrific. The Country is a mighty word, but one which we have forgotten. The first boom of a German gun has made it come to life in all its virgin beauty and in fiery letters it shines in the heart of each of us. . . ."

Antoshka frowned; a sensation of pins and needles went down his back. What words to write! Not as it was a fortnight ago, when he was told to make a survey of summer entertainments. He recalled how at the Bouffe a man had come on the stage, got up like a pig and had sung, "A pigling am I and not ashamed, a pigling am I and proud to be so named. My mother was a sow and I am like her, somehow. . . ."

"We are entering an heroic era. For too long have we been rotting alive. War is our purification. Fire, blood and victory!" Thus wrote Antoshka, spluttering his pen.

Notwithstanding the opposition on the part of the defeatists, led by Belosvetov, Arnoldov's article was printed, with the concession to the former of having it placed on the third page under the pedantic headline "In War Time." Soon letters from readers began to arrive at the office, some expressing themselves with enthusiasm about the article, others with bitter irony. But the former were by far the more numerous. Antoshka's pay was increased and within a week he was summoned

to the chief editor's room, where grey-haired, red-faced Vasili Vasilevitch, who smelt of English eau-de-Cologne, offered Antoshka an armchair and said:

"You must go into the country."

"Yes, sir."

"We ought to know what the peasants think and say. It is expected of us." The palm of his hand came down on a pile of letters. "The intellectuals have been aroused to a great interest in the country. We must give them a vivid, direct impression of this sphinx."

"The results of mobilization have shown a great patriotic outburst, Vasili Vasilevitch."

"I know. But how the devil did they come by it? You can go where you please, but keep your ears open and ask questions. By Saturday I shall expect five hundred words from you on your impressions of the country."

From the office Antoshka went to the Nevsky, where he bought a travelling suit of a military cut, brown leggings and a flask; then he had luncheon at Albert's and came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to go to Khlibi, where Elisaveta Kievna was spending the summer with her brother Kie. In the evening he booked a place on the international train.

The village of Khlibi consisted of some fifty yards, overgrown with gooseberry bushes, vegetables and old lime trees, growing in the middle of the road. The large school building, which was once the squire's house, stood on a hillock. The village lay in a valley, between a swamp and the river Svinukha and was thickly overgrown with nettles and burdock. The village lands were not large, the soil was poor, and the peasants nearly all went into Moscow to work at some trade.

Towards the evening, when Arnoldov drove into the

village on a rustic cart, he was amazed at the stillness thereof. Only a stupid hen cackled as it rushed out from beneath the horse's feet and an ancient dog barked in a shed, and somewhere along the river, there was a sound of felling, and two rams were butting at each other in the middle of the road.

Arnoldov climbed down by some stone gates, where some lions, with the plaster peeling off them, stood in the middle of a lawn. He settled with the deaf old man, who had brought him from the station and walked up a path, whence, through the transparent green of the birches, he could see the white pillars of the schoolhouse, tumbling down on one side. On the porch, sitting on a half rotten step, were the schoolmaster, Kie Kievitch, and Elisaveta Kievna, who were leisurely conversing together. Long shadows from the tall willows fell on the meadow below. Starlings flew in dark clouds above. A horn sounded in the distance, calling together the flock. Several red cows came out of the rushes and one lifted its head and mooed. Kie Kievitch was very like his sister; he had the same kind of pencilled eyes, but they were not kindly; he wore spectacles and chewed a straw as he spoke.

"Added to everything, Lisa, you are extraordinarily unversed in the sexual sphere. Types like you are the sickening outcasts of a bourgeois civilization. For revolutionary work you are utterly useless."

Elisaveta Kievna gazed with an indolent smile at the meadow, where the setting sun had turned the grass and the shadows golden.

"I shall go to Africa," she said. "Mind, Kie, I shall go to Africa. They have long been asking me to come."

"I don't believe in it and consider it untimely and ridiculous to urge the Negroes to revolt."

"Well, we can judge of that there."

"The present European war is bound to end with the international proletariat taking into its own hands the initiative of the social revolution. We must be prepared for this and should not waste our energies on purely political work. The more so as it is all nonsense about the Negroes."

"It's an awful bore to listen to you, Kie. You seem to have learnt everything by heart. All is plain as a book to you."

"Every person, Lisa, must try to put his ideas into some systematic order and not worry as to whether what he says is boring."

"Try then, and may it do you good."

Similar conversations took place between brother and sister every day, neither having anything to do. When Elisaveta Kievna wanted something sensational, she would say unfair things about the party to which Kie Kievitch belonged. He would frown and restrain himself for a time, then he would burst out at his sister in a choking voice. She would listen to his reproaches, weeping silently and then go to bathe in the river.

The evening was still. Motionless hung the green transparent branches of the drooping birches before the porch. The rasping of a crake was heard from the grass on the hill. Kie Kievitch was saying that it was time that Lisa settled down and devoted herself to some useful work. Lisa gazed with her short-sighted eyes at the swaying outlines of the trees in the orange sunset, thinking of how she would live among the liberated Negroes, alone and worshipped by them, and of how it would come to the ears of Ivan Ilyitch Teliegin and how he would come to her and say, "I never understood you, Lisa. You are a wonderfully fascinating woman."

At this moment Antoshka Arnoldov approached the porch and putting down his bag, said:

"Here I am, Lisa. You didn't expect me, did you? How do you do, my splendid woman?" He kissed her on the cheek. "In the first place, I want something to eat and then want lots of material. I must send a feuilleton by Saturday. Is that your brother? He is the very man I want."

Antoshka sat down on the steps, stretched out his legs in brown gaiters and lighted a pipe.

"Tell me, Kie Kievitch, what do they say and think about the war in this village of yours?"

Kie Kievitch assumed a hurt and bored air, so that it should not by any chance be suspected that he could be impressed by any authorities, such as writers from the capital. He munched a straw and puckered the skin on his forehead.

"To my mind," he replied, "the war has been cynically staged by international capitalists. Germany alone cannot be held to blame. The proletariat was compelled, for a time, at all events, to take its stand on the patriotic platform."

"I should like to know what the peasants themselves say."

"The devil knows them. I attempted to explain to them the social and economic under-currents of the war, but what was the use? Such ignorance that it makes one despair of the class!"

"Still, they must say something, I suppose."

"Go into the village and hear for yourself. It may be of some use for verses or stories."

Kie Kievitch was annoyed and ceased speaking. The setting sun sank into a long blue-purple cloud. The shadows cast by the willows in the meadow died out.

And in the mist, that rose gently in the river valley, the moaning and sighing of the sad voices of frogs spread and grew friendly.

"We have wonderful frogs," Elisaveta Kievna remarked. Kie Kievitch looked at her askance and shrugged his shoulders. The August stars were sprinkled over the sky, now cold. Below in Khlibi, it was damp and smelt of unsettled dust, raised by the flocks, and of new milk. At a yard, here and there, stood an unharnessed cart. Under the limes, where it was quite dark, the wheel of a well squeaked, a horse neighed and drank, breathing hard. On an open space near a barn, which had a thatched roof like a nightcap, three girls were sitting on logs, singing softly.

Elisaveta Kievna and Arnoldov came up and also sat down on a log near by.

> Khlibi our village
> Is adorned with all,
> Chairs and posies
> And pictures of girls. . . .

the girls sang. The one at the end turned to the newcomers and said quietly:

"Well, girls, shall we go to bed?" But they did not move. Some one was fidgeting about within the barn, then a door creaked and out came a short, bald-headed peasant, groaning. He fumbled for some time with the padlock, then he came up to the girls, put his hand on his loins and stroked his goat-like beard.

"Still singing, nightingales?"

"We are, Uncle Fedor, but not about you."

"I'll get the whip to you in a minute. What trick is this to be singing at night?"

"Do you envy us?"

Another remarked with a sigh:

"We've nothing else left us, Uncle Fedor, but to sing about our Khlibi."

"Things are in a bad way with you. You are quite orphans now."

Fedor sat down by the girls. The one nearest him said:

"The Kosmodemianskia women are saying that they are taking such a lot of people to the war lately, half the world."

"It will soon be our turn, girls."

"Will they take us to the war?"

"An order has been given that all women are to have their hair shorn like soldiers. Only, they say that you smell too strong when on the march."

The girls laughed. The furthest one again asked:

"Uncle Fedor, with whom is our Tsar at war?"

"With the European."

"Where does he live, Uncle Fedor?"

"By the sea, most of them."

At this a shaggy head rose from a stump hidden in the grass and pulling a coat over itself with a groan, said:

"Hold your nonsense, do. What is that about a European? It's with the German we are at war."

"Everything is possible," Fedor replied.

The head disappeared once again. Antoshka Arnoldov took out his cigarette-case and offering Fedor a cigarette, asked cautiously:

"Do tell me, did your men go willingly to the war?"

"Many went eagerly, sir."

"Then there was enthusiasm?"

"There was. There is plenty to eat in the army, they say. Why shouldn't they go? At any rate, they would see what it was like there. And if you are killed, well,

you have to die here just the same. Our land is wretchedly poor, extra work is bad. We eke out a living on bread and kvas. There, they say, the food is good. You get meat twice a day and State sugar and tea and tobacco, which you can smoke as much as you like."

"But isn't fighting horrible?"

"Horrible? Of course, it is. Nineteen reserves were taken from our village and three others went voluntarily. Can you lend me a cigarette, sir?"

XV

Tarpaulin-covered carts, loads of hay and straw, ambulances, a huge trough of pontoons, moved, jolting and creaking, along the wide road, covered with liquid mud. A fine, driving rain came down ceaselessly. The ruts and ditches on either side of the road were filled with water. The dim forms of trees and thickets could be seen in the distance. A keen wind blew, and scattered, rolling clouds sped over the stormy, sodden fields.

Amidst yells and curses and cracking of whips and jarring of axle on axle, the heavy baggage-train of the advancing Russian army moved in the mud and rain. On either side of the road lay dead and dying horses and wheels of upturned carts. Now and again a military motor-car would dash into the stream. There were shouts and groans; the horses reared; the loads on the inclining carts came down and the men on top of them followed with a clatter.

Further along, where there was a break in the stream, soldiers stretched far in the distance, ploughing through the mud with bags and tents slung over their shoulders. Through the disorderly crowd came the baggage-carts, with rifles sticking out on all sides and orderlies huddled on top. Now and again a man would run into the fields, put aside his rifle and squat down.

Still further on there were more jolting carts and pontoons and gun-carriages and carriages with drenched figures in officers' cloaks inside them. The rumbling stream would now bear down into the open valley,

crowding together, yelling, fighting at the bridges, now stretch slowly up the hills and disappear over the top. From either side still other loads poured in, of bread and hay and shells. Small cavalry units passed them in the fields.

With a clang and clatter of iron, artillery would break into the stream now and then. Big, broad-chested horses, whose riders with bearded, angry faces, cracked their whips at horses and men, ploughed through the road, dragging the jolting, flat-nozzled guns behind them. And once more the stream came together and flowed into the wood, which smelt strongly of mushrooms and dead leaves and was filled with the soft sounds of the falling rain.

Further along, on either side of the road, chimneys stuck out from heaps of rubbish and charred wood; a broken lantern swung to and fro; on the brick wall of a house, split by a shell, a gaily coloured poster of a cinematograph flapped about. And here too, in a cart without its front wheels, lay a wounded Austrian in a blue coat, probably dying, with a drawn yellow face, dim desperate eyes.

About twenty miles from the spot there was a dull rumbling of guns on the smoky horizon. Thither troops and baggage flowed day and night. Thither from every corner of Russia sped trains bearing bread and men and shells.

The whole country was shaken by the thunder of the guns. At last there would be set free all that was forbidden and smothered, the amassed store of greed, insatiability, iniquity and evil.

The population of the town, satiated, slack and corrupted as they were by an evil life, seemed to awake from a suffocating sleep. In the rumble of the guns the

refreshing voice of the world storm was heard. They began to feel that the old life was no longer bearable, that Russia would rot alive. And with a malicious joy the people welcomed the war.

In the country they did not trouble much as to why and with whom there was a war. What did it matter? Had not anger and hate like a bloody mist for long bedimmed the eyes? A time of terrible deeds had come. Young fellows and young peasants left their women and girls and crowded eagerly into the goods-carriages and were borne whistling and singing ribald songs past the towns. The old life had ended. Russia, like a large spoon, began to stir up the mud. All stirred, all moved, drunk with the strong liquor of war.

Within about eight miles of the battle lines the baggage and troop units dispersed and vanished. Here everything human and living ended. Every one was allotted a place in the earth, in a trench. There one had to sleep, to eat, and kill lice and "crack" one's rifle at the line of rainy mist until one was sick.

At night the whole horizon would grow a flaming red; slowly the burning houses blazed; the red strings of a rocket would make a line through the sky and come down again in stars; with piercing shrieks shells flew and crashed to the earth, exploding in pillars of fire, smoke and dust.

There was a gnawing in the stomach and one was sick with fear; the skin crept and the fingers clenched. About midnight signals would be given. Trembling officers would come running up. With curses and oaths and blows the men would be aroused, puffed from sleep and dampness. Stumbling and swearing and yelling, a disorderly group of men would run across the field, now lying down, now springing up, and deafened and mad,

with memories lost in their terror and wrath, they would spring into the enemy trenches.

Afterwards, no one ever remembered what took place in those trenches.

If a man boasted of heroic deeds, of the way in which he plunged his bayonet, or how at a blow from the butt end of his rifle, a head split open and brains came out, he would simply be lying.

After the business of the night there were corpses and the taking of their tobacco, blankets and coffee.

A new day dawned; the kitchens arrived. The men, sleepy and starved, ate and smoked. Afterwards they talked nonsense of women and also lied freely. They caught lice and slept. They slept for days in that bare spot of thunder and death, befouled by excrement and blood.

Thus too, in the dirt and dampness, without taking his clothes and boots off for weeks at a time, lived Teliegin, The army regiment in which he had enrolled as ensign was attacking. More than half the strength of officers and men had been put out of action. No reinforcements had come and every one merely longed for the moment when he would be moved to the rear, so worn and exhausted was he.

But the higher command was anxious to press into Austria through the Carpathians before the winter came and to lay the country waste, it being necessary to make the Austrians starve. People were not spared; the supply of humans was plentiful. It seemed that the sustained effort of three months' ceaseless fighting must break the resistance of the Austrian army, which was retreating in disorder, that Krakow and Vienna would fall and that the left wing of the Russians would attack the German rear.

In pursuance of this plan, the Russian troops marched to the west without stopping, taking thousands upon thousands of prisoners, huge stores of provisions, shells, guns and clothing. In former wars but a part of such booty, or one only of those long, bloody battles, in which whole corps were wiped out, would have decided the campaign. Yet, notwithstanding the fact that the regular army had perished in the early fighting, determination hardened. Hatred became the highest manifestation of virtue. Voluntarily or involuntarily, all joined the war, children and old men, the whole people. Something in this war surpassed human understanding. It would seem that the enemy was crushed, bled out, that one more effort would bring decisive victory. The effort was made and in place of the vanishing enemy army another grew up, that with a hopeless determination, marched on death and destruction. Neither Tartar nor Persian hordes could have fought so cruelly or died so readily as did these spoiled Europeans of frail physique, or the cunning Russian peasants who knew themselves to be dumb beasts—meat in the butchery arranged by their masters. It was this determination on the part of the peoples that spoiled all the plans of the higher command and made one think that in this war there was some other aim than the victory of this or that side. But the aim was, so far, hidden from the understanding.

The remnant of Teliegin's regiment was entrenched on the bank of a narrow, deep river. The position was a bad one, being exposed, while the trenches were small. The regiment was hourly expecting an order to advance, but for the time being all were pleased to be able to sleep, change boots and rest, although from the other side of the river, where the Austrians were strongly entrenched, sharp gunfire was in progress.

In the evening, when for some three hours the firing usually ceased, Ivan Ilyitch set out to visit the regimental staff, quartered in a deserted castle about a mile and a half from the position.

A white, fleecy mist lay on the winding, weed-covered river and wound about the bushes on the bank. It was still and damp and the air smelt of moist leaves. Now and then, from across the water, came the dull solitary boom of a gun.

Ivan Ilyitch jumped across a ditch into the road, stopped and lighted a cigarette. On either side of him, from out of the mist, rose tall, bare trees, that seemed monstrously high. Beyond them, a low-lying swamp looked as if it had been filled with milk. A bullet whizzed plaintively in the stillness. Ivan Ilyitch sighed deeply. He walked along the scrunching gravel, gazing upwards at the shadowy treetops and branches. The quietness and the fact that he was alone and able to think, had a soothing effect on him. Gone was the splitting noise of the day, and his heart grew filled with a gentle, poignant sadness. Once more he sighed. He threw away his cigarette, put his hands at the back of his head and walked along in another world, filled only with the shadows of trees, his warm, love-laden heart and Dasha's invisible charm.

Dasha was with him in that hour of quiet and rest. He felt himself in contact with her every time the metallic shriek of the shells ceased, the booming of the guns, the yelling and the oaths and all the sounds so foreign to this God-created world, when he would creep into some dugout and bury his head in his coat. At those moments an indescribable gentleness permeated him and filled his heart. Dasha was with him always, true and severe.

It seemed to Ivan Ilyitch that when he came to die, he would feel the joy of this contact to the last moment and that when liberated from himself, he would be submerged and resurrected in it. He did not think of death, nor was he afraid of it. Nothing could now tear him from that wonderful condition of life, not even death.

That summer, when he had come to Evpatoriya to see Dasha, he was frightened and anxious and tried to invent all manner of excuses. But the meeting on the roadside, Dasha's unexpected tears, her fair head pressed against him, her hair, her arms, her shoulders, which all smelt of the sea, her tear-stained mouth, which said, as she raised her face to him with half-closed, wet eyelids, "I did so want to see you, dear Ivan Ilyitch!" and all those unspoken things which seemed to have dropped from the skies into that road by the sea, had, in a few minutes, changed Ivan Ilyitch's life. Instead of offering excuses, he said softly and resolutely, gazing at her beloved face, which trembled in fear and agitation:

"I will love you always, Dasha."

Afterwards, he wondered whether he had spoken the words at all, or had merely thought them, Dasha understanding. She had dropped her head, and taking her hands from his shoulders, said:

"I have a lot to tell you. Come."

They had gone and sat down by the water on the sand. Dasha had picked up a handful of stones and leisurely threw them into the water.

"The fact is, I don't know how you would treat me if you knew everything," she said, observing with a corner of her eye that Ivan Ilyitch had turned pale and com-

pressed his lips. "It doesn't matter, however; you can treat me as you like."

She sighed and leaned her chin on her hands. Her eyes again filled with tears, but she wiped them angrily with her bare hand.

"Without you I have lived very badly, Ivan Ilyitch. If you can, forgive me."

And she told him everything, frankly and in detail. She told him about Samara and how she had come to this place and met Bezsonov, how she had lost desire to live in her disgust at the Petersburg poison, which had come to life again and affected her blood, fired her curiosity. . . .

"Until what age must I wait to know? I was twenty, thank God, a woman like other women. I wanted to wallow in dirt—a fit place for me. But I was frightened at the last moment . . . I hate myself . . . Ivan Ilyitch, my dear. . . ." Dasha clasped her hands. "Help me. I won't, I can't hate myself any more. . . . I am a bad, wicked girl . . . But it can't be that everything in me is lost . . . I want to love, my dear . . . Not myself, oh, no. . . ."

After this, Dasha lay on the sand without speaking for a long time. Ivan Ilyitch gazed intently at the sunlit mirror of blue water; in spite of everything his soul was filled with gladness. When he dared to look at Dasha, she was sleeping, her mouth slightly open, like a child's.

The fact that the war had begun and that Teliegin had to join his regiment on the morrow, Dasha realized only later, when a gust of wind caused a wave to splash her feet and she sighed and opened her eyes and sat up and looked at Ivan Ilyitch with a gentle, astonished smile.

"Ivan Ilyitch!"

"Yes."

"Do you like me?"

"Yes."

"Very much?"

"Yes."

Then she started to crawl towards him in the sand, on her knees, sat down beside him and turning, put her hand in his, as she had once done on the steamer.

"And I also . . . Ivan Ilyitch."

She pressed his fingers and asked after a pause:

"What was that you were telling me in the road about a war?" She wrinkled her forehead. "With whom is there a war?"

"With the Germans."

"And you?"

"I am going tomorrow."

Dasha gave a little cry and was silent.

Running towards them by the sea, in his crumpled striped pajamas, that looked as if he had just got out of bed, was Nikolai Ivanovitch. He was red in the face, shouting something and waving a newspaper.

He took not the slightest notice of Ivan Ilyitch. When Dasha said, "Nikolai, this is my best friend," Nikolai Ivanovitch seized Teliegin by the coat and shaking him, bawled into his face:

"Remember, my friend, I'm a patriot above everything. I won't give your Germans an inch of our land. . . ."

The whole of that day Dasha did not leave Ivan Ilyitch's side. She was quiet and pensive. To him the day was filled with the blue light of the sun and the sound of the sea, incredibly vast. Every moment was like a separate lifetime.

Teliegin and Dasha wandered along the shore in a dazed condition, or lay on the sand or sat on the terrace,

perpetually followed by Nikolai Ivanovitch, who harangued largely about the cause of the war and German aggression. Teliegin listened, nodding his head, while he thought "Dasha, Dasha, darling. . . ."

"You've no backbone at all, my friend," and he turned to Dasha. "I could strangle Wilhelm with my own hands."

Dasha looked at his flushed face and thought, "O, God, take care of Ivan Ilyitch. . . ."

In the evening, however, they managed to escape from Nikolai Ivanovitch and took a long walk by the bay. They walked in silence, stepping on each other's feet, touching each other's elbows. It suddenly occurred to Ivan Ilyitch that he must speak some kind of words to Dasha. She must be expecting him to make a passionate and moreover a definite declaration. But what words could his wooden tongue frame? Can words express the emotions that filled him, the sunlight that had entered his heart? Oh, no!

Ivan Ilyitch grew sad. "It would be a shame to speak to her," he thought. "She cannot love me, but like the good, true girl she is, she will consent if I propose. That would be forcing her. Moreover, I have no right to speak. We are parting for who knows how long; I may never come back from the war . . . It would make her wait uselessly to keep her word . . . It cannot be. . . ."

It was one of those attempts at self-effacement, so characteristic of Ivan Ilyitch. Dasha stopped suddenly and supporting herself against his shoulder, took off her shoe. . . .

"Oh, Lord, oh, Lord," she said, shaking the sand from her shoe. She put it on, drew herself up and sighed deeply.

"I know I shall love you very much when you are gone, Ivan Ilyitch."

She put her hands on his shoulders and looking at him with her clear, almost severe grey eyes without a smile in them, she sighed again lightly.

"Even there we will be together, won't we?"

Ivan Ilyitch drew her gently to himself and kissed her soft, trembling lips. Dasha shut her eyes. When their breath gave out, Dasha drew back. She took his arm and they walked along by the heavy, dark water, which in purple flashes lapped the shore at their feet.

In every moment of quiet Ivan Ilyitch recalled these incidents with an unfailing emotion. Strolling along the road with his hands at the back of his head, in the mist, among the trees, he once more saw Dasha's fixed gaze, felt her kiss, the breath of life.

In that hour he had ceased to be alone and would never be alone again. A girl in a white dress had kissed him one evening by the sea and the leaden ring of loneliness had melted. He, Ivan Ilyitch Teliegin, had ceased to be. In that wonderful moment, a completely new Ivan Ilyitch had come to life. The first was subject to destruction, the second would never cease to exist. The first was solitary as a devil on a waste, the second longed to expand, to increase, to take to his warm, palpitating heart men and beasts and the earth and everything.

"Who goes there?" a starved, coarse voice asked from out the fog.

"One of us," Ivan Ilyitch replied. He put his hands in the pockets of his coat and turned down by some oak trees towards the dark, heavy outline of the castle,

in several windows of which a yellow light burned.

On catching sight of Teliegin, some one at the entrance threw away a cigarette and drew himself erect.

"Has the post come?"

"No, Your Honour, we are expecting it."

Ivan Ilyitch walked into a hall. A large, black piano with a leg gone, was supported against a wall. At the top of a wide, winding oak staircase hung a Gobelin tapestry, probably very old. It depicted Adam and Eve standing beneath some thin trees. Eve held an apple in her hand, a symbol of the sweets of life, Adam held a flowering branch, a symbol of the fall and the redemption. Their faded faces and elongated bodies were dimly lighted by a candle, which was stuck in a bottle standing on the banister.

Ivan Ilyitch opened a door to the right and entered a bare room with a moulded ceiling, tumbled down at one end, the result of a shell hitting the wall outside the day before. On a bunk, by a blazing fire, sat Lieutenant Prince Belsky and Sub-Lieutenant Martinov. Ivan Ilyitch greeted them, asked when they expected the car from the army staff and sat down near by, on some cartridge tins, his eyes blinking at the light.

"Are they still firing on you, eh?" Martinov asked derisively for some reason.

Ivan Ilyitch did not reply; he shrugged his shoulders. Prince Belsky went on speaking in a low voice.

"It's the stink that's the worst. As I wrote to my people, I'm not afraid to die. I'm ready enough to give my life for my country. In fact, that's why I transferred to the infantry and am sitting in the trenches. But the stink's killing me."

"The stink's nothing. If you don't like it, you needn't smell," said Martinov, arranging his shoulder-strap.

"What gets me is that there are no women. Perfectly ridiculous! It can't lead to any good. There's the army commander, an old sandbox. He's arranged a kind of monastery for us. No vodka, no women. Is this the way of looking after the army? Is this war? I have been at the front for three months, for the fourth I'll try and get back to the rear, somehow. Why, eh? Give me a woman and damn the rear. I've always said you've got to be jolly when you're fighting."

Martinov got up from the bunk and began to poke the logs with his boot. Prince Belsky smoked pensively, staring at the fire.

"Five million men in this stink," he said, "and all the rotting corpses and horses. I shall always remember the war as a stench. Augh!"

Outside, the throbbing of a car was heard.

"Gentlemen, the post!" an excited voice called from the door. The officers went outside. Dark figures moved about the car; several men ran across the yard. A hoarse voice said, "Gentlemen, don't snatch!"

At last the bags of letters and parcels were brought into the hall and unpacked on the stairs, beneath Adam and Eve. It was the post for a whole month. The dirty canvas bags contained a sea of love and longing, all that was dear and clean in the life that had been left behind.

"Gentlemen, don't snatch!" said Captain Babkin, a stout, red-faced man. "Ensign Teliegin, six letters and a parcel for you. Lieutenant Nejny, two letters. . . ."

"Nejny was killed, gentlemen."

"When?"

"This morning."

Ivan Ilyitch walked over to the fireplace. All the six letters were from Dasha. The addresses on the envelopes were written in a large, rather childish hand. Ivan Il-

yitch loved the dear hand that had written the letters so large, to make sure they would be legible and that there would be no mistake. Bending to the fire, he carefully tore open one of the envelopes. The letter brought him such memories that he was forced to shut his eyes. Then he read:

"After we had seen you off, Nikolai Ivanovitch and I that same day went to Simferopol and caught the Petersburg train that evening. We are now living in our old flat. Nikolai Ivanovitch is very anxious; there is no news from Katia and we don't know where she is. What happened between us is so big and unexpected that I have hardly come to myself yet. Don't be angry with me for addressing you as 'you.' I love you. I shall be true to you and will love you very much. At present everything is so confusing. Troops are passing in the street and the band is playing. It is so sad. It seems as if gladness were going away with the drums and the troops. I know I ought not to write like this to you, but still, you will be careful at the front. . . ."

"Your Honour. Your Honour." Teliegin turned with difficulty. A messenger stood in the doorway. "A telephone message for you, Your Honour."

"What is it?"

"You are wanted in the battalion."

"Who wants me?"

"Sub-Lieutenant Rosanov. He said, 'Tell him to come as soon as possible.'"

Teliegin folded up the unfinished letter and put it inside his shirt with the others, then he pulled his cap over his eyes and went out.

The fog had grown thicker; the trees were now invisible; one walked in the milky mist, keeping to the road only by the sound of the scrunching gravel beneath

the feet. Ivan Ilyitch scrunched over the gravel, repeating, "I shall be true to you and will love you very much."

Suddenly he stopped and listened. No sound could be heard in the fog, only the heavy drops that fell from the trees now and then. Soon a gurgling and soft rustling were borne to him from some short distance ahead. As he went the gurgling sound grew louder. Suddenly his foot came down an empty space. A clump of earth had broken off beneath it and fallen with a heavy splash into the water.

It must have been the place by the burnt bridge, where the road ended by the river. On the opposite bank, about a hundred steps from where he stood, he knew were the Austrian trenches, which came right up to the water. And in fact, immediately after the splash, like the crack of a whip, a rifle report came rolling down the river, followed by another and a third until, like the bursting of iron, came a long boom and answering it, through the fog, came rapid reports. Louder and louder it banged and boomed and shrieked from every part of the river and in the midst of the fiendish noise the quick, hurried report of a machine gun could be heard, sounding like the cracking of nuts. A shell burst in the wood. Broken, the fog hung over the earth like a heavy veil, screening the usual, horrible scene. Several bullets hit against a tree near by, bringing down the branches. Ivan Ilyitch turned into the fields and groped his way to the bushes. The firing stopped just as suddenly as it had begun. Ivan Ilyitch took off his cap and wiped his wet forehead. Once more it was still, with the sound only of the falling drops from the bushes. Thank God, he would be able to read Dasha's letters that night. Ivan Ilyitch laughed and jumped across a ditch. At last he heard some one yawn near by and say:

"There, you've got your letter. Vasily, you've got your letter."

"Be quiet," an abrupt voice said, "some one is coming."

"Who is there?"

"One of us, one of us," Teliegin said hurriedly as he caught sight of a breastwork trench and two bearded faces sticking out of it.

"What company are you?"

"The third, Your Honour, ours. You should not walk up there, Your Honour, you may be hit."

Teliegin jumped into the trench and walked to the entrance of the officers' dugout. The men, who had been awakened by the firing, were talking among themselves.

"They could easily cross the river in a fog like this."

"We'd never let them."

"What a row to kick up all of a sudden! What a life! Did they think they'd scare us, or were they scared themselves?"

"Aren't you scared?"

"To be sure, I am."

"Gavril has had his finger blown off, boys."

"Has he gone to get it bandaged?"

"You would have laughed; he gave a howl and held it up like this."

"Lucky devil; they'll send him home now."

"No fear! If he'd had his arm off they'd have sent him home, but not for a finger. They'll keep him rotting around here and then back to the company he'll come."

"I wonder when the war's going to end."

"Chuck it."

"It'll end some day, but we shan't be there to see it."

"If we'd only take Vienna."

"What do you want with Vienna, eh?"

"We could look at the place, at any rate."

"If the war's not finished by the spring, the men'll make off, all the same. Who's to do the ploughing? The women? We've had enough of being chopped about. And what's it for? It's time it stopped. If you drink long enough, you'll fall away on your own account."

"The generals won't stop the war."

"What do you know about it? Has some one told you? I'll smash you in the jaw, you ——!"

"The generals won't stop the war."

"He's right, boys. It suits them; they draw double pay and get crosses and honours into the bargain. A fellow told me that for every recruit the English pay our generals thirty-seven and a half roubles."

"The dirty dogs! They sell us like beasts."

"Stop this talk, do. What good does it do?"

"All right. If we hold out, we'll see."

When Teliegin entered the dugout the battalion commander, Sub-Lieutenant Rosanov, an indolent, kindly, intelligent man, stout and short-winded, in spectacles, with a large head and thin hair, said from where he sat in a corner on some horse-cloths: "So you've come at last!"

"I'm sorry, Fedor Kusmitch; I got lost in the fog."

"All right. Look here, my dear fellow, we've got to be busy tonight." He put a crust of bread in his mouth, which he had been holding in his dirty hand. Teliegin shut his jaws tight and pulled himself together. . . .

"The fact is, my dear fellow, we've been ordered to cross to the other side. We must do the business as simply as possible. Sit down here by me. Shall we have a glass of brandy, eh? Now this is my idea . . . We must put a bridge across by the big laburnum. Not more than seventy men must be sent across. You'll do the best you can, God bless you . . . At daybreak we'll follow. . . ."

XVI

"Sussov?"

"Here, Your Honour."

"Dig gently; don't throw into the water. That's right. Forward, boys, forward. Zubtsov!"

"Here, Your Honour."

"Lend a hand here. Put it there. A little more digging . . . Lower it . . . gently. . . ."

"Careful, boys; you'll take the skin from my shoulder . . . Push. . . ."

"Come on there, throw!"

"Don't make such a row, you swine!"

"Fix the other side . . . Shall we lift, Your Honour?"

"Are the ends fixed?"

"It's all ready."

"Up!"

In the clouds of mist, bathed in moonlight, two long stakes connected by cross-beams, a suspension bridge, rose with a groan. The dim figures of the volunteers moved about the bank, speaking and swearing in low hurried tones.

"Is it in place?"

"It's gone in well."

"Lower it. Mind!"

"Gently, boys, gently. . . ."

The stakes, fixed at the ends to the bank of the river, at its narrowest point, leant slowly forward and the bridge was suspended over the water in the fog.

"Does it reach the bank?"

"Lower gently."

"Stop!"

The end of the bridge, however, dropped into the water with a loud splash. Teliegin threw up his hands.

"Lie down!"

The men lay down silently on the bank and were hidden in the grass. The fog had begun to lift, but the night was darker and the air sharper before the dawn. All was still on the other side.

"Zubtsov!" Teliegin called.

"Here."

"Get in and lay the planks."

The tall figure of one of the men who had volunteered, Vasili Zubtsov, slipped past Teliegin to the water. Teliegin saw his large trembling hands clutch the grass, let it go, then disappear.

"Deep enough," Zubtsov said to some one below, in a chilled whisper.

"Hand up the boards, boys."

"The boards, hand up the boards. . . ."

Quickly and silently the boards passed along from hand to hand. They could not be fixed for fear of noise.

Having put down the first row, Zubtsov got out of the water on to the bridge. His teeth chattered as he said in a whisper, "Hurry up, there; don't go to sleep. . . ."

The icy water gurgled quickly under the bridge; the stakes swayed. Teliegin distinguished the dim forms of bushes on the opposite bank and though they were the same bushes as on this side, they took on a sinister appearance. The bushes had to be possessed. Ivan Ilyitch returned to the bank where his men lay.

"Up!" he said sharply.

Exaggeratedly tall, dissolving figures rose instantly in the white mist.

"Run, in single file."

Teliegin turned to the bridge. Just then a ray of sunlight seemed to fall on the cloud of mist, lighting up the yellow boards, thrown down by the black-bearded Zubtsov in terror. The light of a projector swept to the side and fell on the hitherto unseen bare, rugged branches, then came back again to the boards. Teliegin held his breath as before plunging into cold water and ran across the bridge. Suddenly the dark stillness was broken by a loud thundering in the head. From the Austrian side, rifle and machine-gun fire was directed on the bridge. Teliegin jumped on the bank, lay down and turned. A tall man was running across the bridge —he could not make out who it was—with rifle pressed to his breast. The rifle dropped, up went his arms as though he were laughing, and sideways he fell into the water. The machine-gun beat upon the bridge, the water, the bank. Another man ran across and lay down by Teliegin.

"I'll tear the bloody swine."

A second and a third and a fourth ran across. Another threw up his hands with a groan and crashed into the water. . . .

All had now crossed. They lay down and piled up the earth with their shovels. The firing raged all over the river. You could not raise your head. The machine-gun rained down on the spot where the men lay. Suddenly, there was a whiz overhead, once, twice, six times and six deafening explosions followed. It was our side, firing at the machine-gun nest.

Teliegin and Zubtsov sprang up and ran some forty paces ahead, then again they lay down. The machine-gun had again opened fire from out the darkness on the left. The firing on our side was clearly stronger; the

Austrians were driven underground. Taking advantage of the lull in the firing, the men ran to the place where our artillery had broken the wire entanglements by the Austrian trenches. An attempt had evidently been made to repair them at night, for a corpse hung on the wire. Zubtsov cut the wire and the corpse fell like a sack at Teliegin's feet. A volunteer named Laptev, without his rifle, got ahead of the others on all fours. He lay right down by the breastwork.

Zubtsov called to him.

"Get up and throw a bomb!"

But Laptev was silent. He did not move or stir; his heart had evidently failed him in his fright. The firing grew stronger; the men could only keep close to the ground and entrench.

"Get up and throw a bomb, you ——!" Zubtsov yelled. "Throw a bomb!" and he stretched out his rifle and shoved Laptev in the back of his bulging coat. Laptev turned his frightened face, took a grenade from his belt and throwing himself against the breastwork, he hurled it in. When it had exploded, he jumped into the trench.

"Kill, kill!" Zubtsov yelled in an unnatural voice.

About ten men ran ahead and disappeared underground; rending, tearing sounds of explosions followed.

Teliegin flung himself against the breastwork, so blinded by the blood that rushed to his head and he could not detach a grenade. He jumped into the trench, hitting his shoulders against the clay. He stumbled against some soft thing and clenched his teeth to keep himself from screaming outright. He could see a white mask—the face of a man—pressing against the slope of the trench. He seized him by the shoulders and the man kept on muttering and muttering, as in sleep. . . .

"Stop that, you devil; I'm not going to touch you!"

Teliegin bawled at the mask, almost in tears, and he fled, springing over the corpses. But the fighting had now finished. A crowd of grey figures, having thrown down their arms, were climbing out of the trench into the field. They were shoved with the butt ends of rifles, grenades were flung near by to scare them. And still the hidden machine-gun kept on its firing at the crossing. Ivan Ilyitch pushed his way through men and prisoners, crying:

"What are you staring at, eh? Zubtsov! Where's Zubtsov?"

"Here."

"Why do you stand staring, you damned fool?"

"But how can we get at him?"

"I'll get you in the jaw! Come!"

They ran forward. Zubtsov pulled Teliegin by the sleeve. "Stop! There he is!"

From the trench a narrow entrance led to a machine-gun emplacement. Teliegin rushed into it and everything shook in the darkness with the unbearable noise. He seized a man by the elbow and pulled him out. Instant quiet followed. Nothing was heard but the heavy breathing of the man struggling.

"You swine! You won't let go alive, won't you?" Zubtsov muttered at the back and struck him three heavy blows on the head with the butt end of his rifle. The man shuddered, groaned and was still. Teliegin dropped him and rushed out.

"Your Honour, he's chained!" Zubtsov called after him.

Soon it grew light. The yellow clay was spattered with blood and calfskins, tins, frying-pans and corpses were strewn everywhere, the latter huddled like sacks. The starved and sleepy men were some of them lying

down and snoring, others eating jam and others rummaging among the scattered Austrian bags.

The prisoners had long since been driven across the river. The regiment had crossed over and occupied the position. The artillery was bombing the second Austrian lines, which were replying feebly. A drizzly rain fell; the fog had dispersed. Ivan Ilyitch, leaning with his elbow on the edge of the trench, looked out at the field over which they had come in the night. It was a field like other fields, rough and wet, with mounds of newly dug earth and a few corpses of his men. And the river was quite close, too. Gone were the monstrous trees and sinister bushes of the night before. What an amount of energy had been spent in crossing those three hundred paces or so!

The Austrians continued to retreat and the Russian units followed without stopping until nightfall.

Teliegin and his volunteers were ordered to take a small wood on the hill and, after a short space of cross-firing, by the evening occupied the place.

They hastily entrenched, put out the defence guard, connected a telephone to their unit, ate the food they carried in their knapsacks and, though ordered to keep on firing throughout the night, they went to sleep in the rain, amid the smell of decaying leaves.

Teliegin was sitting on a stump, leaning against the soft, moss-covered trunk of a tree. The drops from the branches would now and again fall down his collar, but he did not mind them, for they kept him awake. The excitement of the morning had long passed; he was terribly tired after his eight mile walk through sodden crops, climbing over fence and ditch, scarcely knowing where his stiff feet trod, and with his head swelling from pain.

Some one walked across leaves. Zubtsov's voice asked softly:

"Would you like a biscuit?"

"Thank you."

Ivan Ilyitch took the biscuit from him and began to chew; it was sweet and melted in his mouth. Zubtsov squatted down beside him.

"Can I smoke, sir?"

"Be careful, though."

"I have a pipe."

"You needn't have killed that man, Zubtsov, need you?"

"The man with the machine-gun?"

"Yes."

"I needn't."

"Are you sleepy?"

"No, I shan't go to sleep."

"If I do, give me a shove."

Slowly and softly the raindrops fell on the decaying leaves, on his hands, on the peak of his cap. After the noise, the stench, the murder of the man at the machine-gun, the drops fell like balls of crystal. They fell into the darkness, into the depths, whence came the smell of decaying leaves. The murmuring woke him. "No, no!" Ivan Ilyitch opened his heavy eyes and stared at the dark branches, outlined in charcoal, as it were. "It's silly to fire all night. You must give these peasants some rest. Eight killed, eleven wounded. . . . You ought to be more careful at the front . . . Oh, Dasha, Dasha!" . . . The crystal drops calmed and soothed him. . . ."Drops from Dasha's fingers . . . Oh, God, oh, God. . . ."

"Ivan Ilyitch."

"I wasn't asleep, Zubtsov."

"Of course, you oughtn't to kill a man for nothing. He's got his own home and his family and you go and thrust your bayonet into him as though he were no more than a dummy. A rotten thing to do. And they give you a medal for it into the bargain. When I did the first one in, I couldn't eat afterwards, it made me so sick. . . . And now, this is the ninth or tenth. Horrible, isn't it? It would never have entered my head before. I'd have been frightened, but here they pat you on the head for it. Some one, I suppose, must have taken the sin upon themselves."

"What sin?"

"Mine, if you will. What I mean is, that some one has taken my sin upon himself, a general, or some man in Petersburg who arranges these things. . . ."

"But it's not a sin if you are defending your country."

"But the German is also defending his country, Ivan Ilyitch. Why should we destroy each other? He also thinks he's right. And who's to blame in this game?"

"Dangerous words, my friend."

"Why? Some one, I say, is to blame in this business and we'll find him. It can't be that all those people have been killed for nothing. If it's a question of defending your country, I say, there needn't have been such a war. If you read the papers, you can't make anything out. The world is tearing itself to pieces. Why don't they negotiate instead of fighting?"

"But what do you think about it?"

"I? If I kill nine men, to my mind, I'm responsible, or I'm nothing. But if I am made to do it for nothing, I will tear the man to pieces who made me do it."

"What man?"

"I don't know what man. The man who's to blame."

"The Germans are to blame."

"And I think that the man who allowed this war is to blame. There is no law whereby I can kill and wipe my hands of it. The man who took my sin upon himself is responsible."

A single shot rang through the wood and instantly the defence guard opened an answering fire. It was the more astonishing in that the enemy had not been in that vicinity since yesterday. Teliegin rushed to the telephone. The operator put his head out of a hole.

"The apparatus is not working, Your Honour."

Throughout the whole wood separate shots could be heard and bullets sang about the branches. The advance posts spread out and opened fire. One of the volunteers, Klimov by name, bare-headed, walked up to Teliegin and said in a broken, unnatural voice, "We are surrounded on all sides, Your Honour!" He quickly put his hand to his face, sank to the ground, then fell forward on his face. "I'm dying, brothers!" another voice called in the darkness.

Teliegin could distinguish the tall, motionless figures of his men among the tree trunks. They were all looking towards him. He knew it and his heart grew calm.

He told them to scatter and singly to find their way out of the north side of the wood, probably not yet surrounded, while he himself and those of the men who wished to stay with him, would hold out as long as possible in the trenches.

"I want five men. We'll none of us come out alive. Which of you will stay?"

Zubtsov stepped out from the trees and came towards him, then Sussov and a young fellow named Kolov.

"We want two more," Zubtsov said; "here, Riabkin!"

"All right, I'm coming."

"A fifth, a fifth!"

A short, bearded man, in a short coat and rough cap, rose from the ground.

"I may as well stay."

Six men lay down about twenty paces apart from each other and opened fire. The figures by the trees vanished. Ivan Ilyitch fired several packets and then suddenly, he could see himself as a grinning corpse. In the morning men in grey coats would come and turn him over and rummage about his clothes, and a dirty hand would be thrust inside his shirt.

He put down his rifle and dug a hole in the light, wet earth, then he took out Dasha's letters, kissed them, put them in the hole, covered it up and spread dead leaves over the top.

"Oh, oh!" Sussov's voice moaned to the left. Only two packets of cartridges remained. Ivan Ilyitch crawled over to Sussov and leaning against him, took the packets of cartridges from his case. Teliegin alone was firing now and a man on the other side. The cartridges gave out. Ivan Ilyitch threw down his rifle and looked about. He got up and called to his men.

"Here," one voice only replied and Kolov walked up, leaning on his rifle.

"No cartridges?" Ivan Ilyitch asked.

"None."

"No answer from the others?"

"No."

"Come then, let us run."

Kolov threw his rifle over his shoulder and ran under cover of the bushes. Teliegin had not gone ten paces when a dull, iron finger thrust him in the back.

XVII

The idea of war as dashing cavalry surprises, wonderful marches, heroic deeds of officers and men, turned out to be obsolete.

The famous attack of the Horse-Guards, in which three squadrons in infantry formation passed the wire defences without firing a shot (the regiment commander was Prince Dolgoruky, who walked about under machine-gun fire with a cigar in his mouth and habitually swore in French), led to half the strength of the regiment being lost in killed and wounded in the taking of two damaged heavy guns, which had been held by a single machine-gun.

With the first months of war it was evident that the soldier of former days, the tall, big-whiskered man of the heroic type, who could ride furiously and fence and ignore bullets, was utterly useless. Machinery and the organization of the rear were the primary factors in this war. The soldier was merely expected to die obediently in the place allotted him on the map. Dash and valour were not needed. What was wanted was a soldier without traditions, a civilian, who could hide in the ground and take on the colour of the dust. The romantic regulations of the Hague Conference as to how it was moral and how immoral to kill, were simply broken. And with the scraps of paper, there flew away the last remnants of the moral laws, no longer needed by any one. Thenceforward, there was only one law—alike for man and machine—the law of utility.

Thus, in several months, the war had accomplished the work of a century. Until now many people used to think that every man could find a serious aim in life, be it the means of increasing happiness, or an aim more exalted. It was a remnant of mediævalism; it sapped the will and impeded the march of civilization. The war made it evident that humanity was like an ant-heap. All are of the same hue. There was no good and no evil and no happiness even for the man who understands the sad, hard law of life—the law of building the eternal graveyard.

At a time when human happiness had by law and by force been placed in the category of ideas that had no meaning, when civilization turned to serving evil and destruction instead of good and happiness, science made its most wonderful and miraculous discoveries. It became apparent how much will for evil the human mind contained when freed from moral restrictions.

The civilization of the machinery age had triumphed; the war was its crowning achievement. Throughout the world there was but one law, that of utility, and only one feeling, that of hatred. In every home of an evening hosts and guests would be gathered at the card-tables and bottles, making strategic plans and reading the newspapers, in which war correspondents gave descriptions of the stacks of enemy corpses they had seen with their own eyes. Kindly people and even young girls would gloat over these details.

Children grew up in these years with the idea that life was an expectation of decisive battles, when the Lord God, in His mercy, would allow the destruction of some millions of enemies at one blow and cause whole nations to starve with hunger. It was held brave and righteous to kill. The newspapers reiterated and yelled and shrieked it and increased their circulation tenfold.

Some prophets each morning would predict the results of battles and the collapse of the enemy. The predictions of the famous prophetess, Madame Teb, were discussed. Fortune-tellers appeared, and people who cast horoscopes, and seers. Commodities were scarce. Prices rose. All export of raw materials had stopped. The three ports in the North and East, the only outlets of the isolated country, carried shells and implements of war. The soil was badly tilled. Milliards of paper money passed into the country and the peasants unwillingly sold their bread.

In Stockholm, at a secret gathering of the Occult Lodge of the Anthroposophists, the founder of the order said that the terrible struggle which was taking place in the higher spheres had now been transferred to the earth and that it betokened the advent of a universal catastrophe and Russia would be the sacrifice for the redemption of sin. In fact, all sane reasoning was drowned in the ocean of blood that flowed throughout the three thousand versts of space composing Europe. Reason could not tell why humanity was ruthlessly destroying itself by means of iron, dynamite and hunger. Age-long ulcers had opened. The heritage of the past was asserting itself. But this, too, did not explain it.

The country grew desolate. Life stopped everywhere; people seemed to be governed by the dark forces of chaos. Forces stronger than instinct compelled the Aryan race which ruled the world to cross an abyss that must be filled with corpses of men. The war began to assume the aspect of the first act of a tragedy.

At the spectacle, man, the lord of the earth, became small and puny and grew timid and helpless as a worm. People were sick with this worm-like condition and were disgusted with themselves.

It was hardest of all on the women. Each of them, to the extent of her beauty and charm and ability, tore away the web, which, though made of a fine thread, was strong enough for ordinary life. Leastways, those who had fallen into the web had hummed pleasingly of love.

These nets, too, were broken by the war. To mend them was not to be thought of at such a time. That must wait till better days. And the women waited patiently and time went by and the precious years were barren and sad.

And meanwhile, husbands and lovers and sons were numbered and lying as abstract units beneath piles of earth in field and wood and road.

"I said to my brother, 'You know everything! I hate socialists. You could torture a person if he made a mistake in a single word.' They all think they know everything! 'You're a mere shadow of a man,' I said to him. Naturally, he turned me out of doors after that and here I am in Moscow with no money. Awfully funny. Daria Dmitrievna, do ask Nikolai Ivanovitch. Any kind of a place would do, only I'd prefer a hospital train."

"All right. I'll ask him."

"I have no friends at all here. Do you remember our 'Central Station'? Vasily Valet has been killed. An awful pity; he was such a clever young man. Sapojkov is also somewhere at the front. Jirov is in the Caucasus lecturing on futurism. Three of them are there. Semisvetov, the poet—they say he's the biggest genius Rus-

sia's got. He doesn't believe in the word; he holds by sound only. And then there's Goldsmidt, who teaches life. I don't know what's become of Ivan Ilyitch Teliegin. You used to know him, didn't you?"

Elisaveta Kievna and Dasha were walking slowly down the street, piled high with snow. A fine snow was falling and it creaked beneath their feet. A sledge dashed past them and the driver, putting out a crinkled cloth boot from the box, said in a bantering voice:

"Mind, ladies; I might knock you down."

There had been a great deal of snow that winter. The snow-laden branches of the limes hung low over the street, and the white, snowy sky was filled with the flutter of birds. In scattered flocks jackdaws flew over the town, settling on tower and dome and disappearing into the cold heights.

Dasha stopped at the street corner and rearranged her white shawl. Her face had become thinner; her eyes were larger and more solemn. The snow-flakes settled on her fur coat and muff.

"Ivan Ilyitch is missing," she said. "I know nothing whatever about him."

Dasha raised her eyes and looked up at the birds. They must have been very hungry in that snow-covered town. Elisaveta Kievna, with a frozen smile on her lips, stood with bowed head, enclosed in a cap with ear-flaps. She was dressed in a man's coat, which was tight for her across the chest; the fur collar was too large and the sleeves were too short to cover her reddened hands. Snow-flakes fell and melted on her yellow neck. Her long lashes grew wet with tears. Dasha took her hand.

"I shall talk to Nikolai Ivanovitch today."

"Tell him I'm ready to do anything." Elisaveta Kievna stared at the ground, shaking her head. "I used to

love Ivan Ilyitch madly." She laughed and once more her eyes filled with tears. "It was the best that was in me. I shall come tomorrow. Good-bye."

And she strode away in her cloth galoshes, her cold hands thrust into her pockets like a man.

Dasha stared after her, then she raised her eyebrows and turned the corner, where she entered a private house, that used to belong to a German—the director of a motor works—before the war, and was now used as a hospital. The lofty rooms, decorated in oak and leather, were filled with the smell of iodoform. Lying and sitting on the beds were wounded peasants, who looked like prisoners in their dressing-gowns and shaven heads. One man was pacing the room quietly in slippers, but when Dasha appeared, he glanced quickly towards her, a frown spreading over his low forehead, and lay down on the bed, resting his hands at the back of his head.

"Sister!" a feeble voice called. Dasha approached a big, burly fellow with thick lips. "Turn me on my left side, for Christ's sake," he said with a groan at every word. Dasha put her arms round him and, exercising all her strength, she rolled him over on his side like a sack. "It's time to take my temperature, Sister." Dasha shook the thermometer and put it under his arm. "I'm always sick, Sister. If I eat a crumb, I bring it up. I've no strength left. Can you give me some drops?"

Dasha put the blanket over him and walked away. The men on the further side were smiling, and one of them said:

"That stuff is put on for the gentry; he's as strong as a boar. When they gave us sausages the other day, he ate yards of them."

"Leave him alone. He does no harm. He gives Sister work and it keeps him amused."

"Sister, Semion wants to ask you something, but he's afraid."

Dasha approached a bed on which sat a peasant with merry eyes as round as a daw's and a tiny mouth, like a bear's. His round, wreath-like beard was well brushed. He stuck out his beard towards Dasha as she approached.

"They are making fun of me, Sister. I don't want anything, thank you."

"He's swanking about a letter from a baroness, Sister."

"I've got a letter from my wife, from the country. Would you like to see it?"

Dasha laughed. The load on her heart grew lighter. She sat down on Semion's bed and putting back the sleeves, began to examine the bandages. And Semion, with a desire to give her pleasure, began to detail his aches and pains.

Dasha had come to Moscow in October, when Nikolai Ivanovtich, carried away by patriotic enthusiasm, had obtained a post in the Moscow section of the Union of Towns, which was working for the war. The Petersburg flat had been let to an Englishman of the Military Mission, while he lived in simple style with Dasha, walked about in a leather coat, abused the pampered intelligentsia and worked, to use his own words, like a horse. Dasha read for criminal law, took care of their small household and wrote daily to Ivan Ilyitch. Her soul was calm and protected. The past seemed distant,

almost like another life and there was little desire to probe in it, as everything there was confused and dark. And so she only half lived, anxiously expecting news and troubled as to whether Ivan Ilyitch kept himself pure and clean.

But this spiritual condition did not last long. One morning, at coffee, early in October, Dasha was turning over the sheets of "The Russkoe Slovo," when, among the list of missing, she saw Teliegin's name. The list occupied some two columns of small print. Wounded such and such, killed such and such, missing such and such, and at the very end, came Teliegin, Ivan Ilyitch, Ensign. Thus, in a few strokes, the fact that changed her whole existence was communicated.

Dasha seemed to feel the small type, the dry words, the columns, the headlines, turn to blood. It was a moment of indescribable horror. The newspaper sheet had become the thing it was describing, a blood-soaked, stinking mess. She could smell the stench and hear the groans of speechless voices. What had happened to Ivan Ilyitch and her own despair were lost in an onrush of animal horror and disgust. She clenched her teeth and lay down for a long time, until dusk.

When Nikolai Ivanovitch came back to dinner, he sat at Dasha's feet and stroked them silently. Dasha wept softly.

"Never mind, Dasha, you wait." Nikolai Ivanovitch comforted her. "He is only missing. I dare say he was taken prisoner. There are thousands of cases like that."

Nikolai Ivanovitch went to eat his dinner in the next room and ate noisily as usual, pouring the wine out with a gurgling sound from the decanter. He gave a deep sigh from time to time. At last he appeared in the doorway, wiping his mouth with his table-napkin.

"Would you like some stewed fruit? It's excellent fruit."

Dasha shook her head, bit her handkerchief and burst out crying loudly, covering her head with her coat.

At night, Dasha dreamed that she was in a narrow room, ill lighted by a single window, which was covered with dust and cobwebs. On an iron bedstead sat a strange man in a soldier's shirt. His grey, high cheek-boned face was disfigured, and with both hands, he was picking at his bald head, cracked like an egg, and putting the stuff beneath the skin into his mouth with his fingers.

Dasha screamed so loudly as to bring Nikolai Ivanovitch with a blanket thrown round his shoulders to her bedside. For a long time he could not make out what had happened. He gave Dasha some valerian drops and took a dose himself.

Dasha, sitting up in bed and beating her breast, was saying in quiet despair:

"I can't live any longer. Don't you see, Nikolai, I can't live any longer?"

It was hard to live after what had happened, but to live as Dasha had done hitherto was impossible.

The war had merely touched Dasha with a finger and all was rent and desolate. You could not run away from it. Henceforward every death and every tear was also her concern. After the first days of overwhelming despair, Dasha did the only thing that she could possibly do. She took a month's course in nursing and entered a hospital. Thus her working days began.

It was very hard at first. Wounded were brought from the front whose bandages had not been changed for eight and ten days. The stench that came from the lint, caked with blood and pus, made the nurses sick. At operations, Dasha had to hold a blackened arm or leg from which

the sores were dripping. She grew to know how strong men, stretched on table with clenched teeth, trembled with pain, their bodies covered with sweat.

There was so much suffering in the world that there was not pity enough to bestow on it all. Dasha gradually found herself bound up with this mutilated, blood-soaked life, until she felt that no other life existed. All that had happened previously, her selfish struggles, her disgust with herself, the struggle over the Bezsonov incident, even her real feeling for Ivan Ilyitch, now seemed only so much imagination. At night, a green-shaded lamp burning over an open book; on the other side of the wall, a red-haired soldier muttering; the bottles rattling on the plain wooden shelf from the vibration of a car driving up; some one shuffling along the corridor in slippers; on the half-open door, a fluttering sheet of paper, fastened with a drawing-pin. It was the dull working day of real life.

Sitting in an armchair at night, Dasha recalled the past. It seemed more than ever like a dream to her. She had lived on the heights from whence the earth was unseen. She had lived as all had lived, self-centred, proud and pampered. And she fell from her transparent clouds to the dirty, blood-soaked earth, into that hospital, which smelt of sick human bodies. It was a kind of retribution for past sin.

Had she not sinned in her relation to Ivan Ilyitch? Had she given him love for love? She had kissed him by the sea, had written him letters and admired her own faithfulness. And now that she knew not whether he were living or dead, she had not the heart to dissemble. In that hospital, where sick men were snoring and a Russian soldier was dying, to whom she would have to administer morphia in the next ten minutes, where the heights were forgotten,

she began to realize that she had not really cared for Ivan Ilyitch for a moment. And for the self that had written him those proud, false letters, she had ceased to care at all.

The meeting that day with Elisaveta Kievna had had a disturbing effect on Dasha. The day had been a hard one. Wounded had been brought from Galicia in a bad condition. One had to have a hand amputated, another an arm, while two were raving with delirium and tossing about on their beds. Dasha was very tired that day, but she could not rid her mind of the image of Elisaveta Kievna with her reddened hands and the man's coat she wore and her pitiful smile and her eyes filled with tears.

Resting that evening in the ante-room, Dasha stared at the green lamp-shade, reflecting that neither the hard work nor her weariness could justify her spiritual coldness. She had had her fill that day of groans and mutterings, had witnessed how the human body trembled in deadly convulsions, but her heart had remained as cold as ice. Her heart should have bled at the pain she had seen, but it did not bleed and she had felt neither pity nor love. "Oh, God!" But she had no love for God. She did not care for others or for herself. "If I could only stand crying at a street corner and say to a perfect stranger, 'I loved Ivan Ilyitch madly,' and go to him with my love!"

Dasha kept thinking of Elisaveta Kievna, exalting her in her thoughts and depreciating herself. She shifted about in a large armchair and opened a book. It was a report for three months of "The Activities of the Union of Towns." It contained columns and figures and incomprehensible words such as "transport" and "balance."

In despair, missing the sense of the words, Dasha stared at the columns of figures. She could see herself from an entirely new angle. She was filled with shame. She threw down the book and went into the ward.

The wounded were sleeping; the air was stuffy. High beneath the oak ceiling, in the yellow circle of a large crystal chandelier, a dim lamp was burning. A young Tartar soldier with an amputated arm, was raving and tossing his shaven head from side to side on his pillow. Dasha put an icebag against his brown forehead and threw back his blanket. She then went the round of all the beds and seated herself on a stool, her hands resting on her knees. "My heart has not been taught," she thought; "I could only love the fine and beautiful, but my heart was never taught to pity and love the unlovable."

"Are you sleepy, Sister?" a kindly voice asked. Dasha turned. From his bed, Semion's bearded head was staring at her.

"Why aren't you sleeping?" Dasha asked.

"I had a sleep in the day."

"Does your arm ache?"

"It's stopped now . . . Sister?"

"Yes?"

"Your face looks weary; you must be dying for sleep. Why not lie down for a bit? I'll keep an eye here and will call you, if necessary."

"But I'm not sleepy, Semion."

"Have you got any one at the front?"

"My sweetheart."

"God will take care of him."

"He is missing."

"Dear, dear!" Semion shook his head with a sigh. "I had a brother who was missing, but we got a letter from

him; he was taken prisoner. Is your sweetheart a nice young man?"

"Very."

"What a pity! I wonder if I've heard of him? Tell me his name."

"Ivan Ilyitch Teliegin."

"Why, I have heard of him! Wait a moment. I have. He's been taken prisoner. I swear he has. What regiment was he in?"

"The Kasansky."

"That's the man! He's been taken prisoner. He's alive, thank God. Such a nice fellow. Never mind, Sister; have patience, my child. We will soon beat the Germans. Our boys tell us they've got nothing left to eat. When the snow melts, the war will end. We shall have peace. Have patience. You will bear him children yet, mark my word."

The tears rose in Dasha's throat as she listened. She knew that Semion was merely inventing it all, that he did not know Ivan Ilyitch, but she felt grateful. Suddenly she bent down and burst into tears. Semion shifted about in his bed and said softly, annoyed with himself:

"Dear, dear, what have I done?"

Dasha rose quickly, pulled out her handkerchief from her apron, and quickly wiped her eyes, saying:

"Lie down, Semion, and go to sleep. If the doctor comes, he'll be angry."

Sitting in the ante-room with her face pressed against the back of her chair, Dasha reflected that bad and indifferent as she was, she had been received with love and welcomed. Her softened heart felt an instant pity for the sick and sleeping men. And in her pity, with a poignant clearness, she could suddenly see Ivan Ilyitch lying on a narrow bed in some barrack and sleeping and breathing

just like these men, and how a sweet dream had brought a sad smile to his lips. . . . How dear and kindred she felt him to be!

Dasha moaned. She got up and began to pace the room. Suddenly the telephone rang. Dasha started and took up the receiver. The loud, jarring noise sounded strange in that sleeping stillness. More wounded had probably come in by the night train.

"Hullo!" she called and her heart began to beat violently. "Heavens! is that you, Katia? Katia? Is that you, my dear? . . ."

XVIII

"So here we are together again, girls," said Nikolai Ivanovitch, drawing down his leather coat over his stomach, and taking Ekaterina Dmitrievna by the chin, he kissed her soundly on the lips. "Good morning, my dear. How did you sleep?" Passing Dasha's chair, he kissed her hair. "She and I are inseparable now, Katia. She's a splendid girl."

He sat down at the table, which was covered with a clean, coloured cloth. He drew a china egg-cup towards himself and cut off the top of the egg in it with his knife.

"Fancy, Katia, I've got to like eggs in the English fashion, with a little mustard and butter. You should try it; it's very nice. In Germany you are allowed only two eggs a month. How does that strike you?"

He opened his large mouth and laughed in a self-satisfied way. "They say that children there are being born without skin. Bismarck used to say, 'We must live at peace with Russia,' but they did not heed him and scorned us, so now they've got to have two eggs a month."

"It's prefectly horrible!" said Ekaterina Dmitrievna, raising her eyebrows. "When children are born without skin, it is horrible whether they are German children or others."

"I am sorry, Katia, but you are talking nonsense."

"I only know that when it's kill, kill, kill every day, it is so horrible that you don't want to live."

"But what can you do, my dear? The time has come

for us to bear the burden of the state on our own shoulders. So far, we have only been reading Elovaiskys who tell us of peasants fighting for the country on some Kulick and Borodinsky fields. We used to think the state a very nice and comfortable thing. You liked to see the huge stretch that Russia made on the map. But now that we have to give a percentage of life to safeguard the integrity of the thing on the map, coloured in green across Europe and Asia, we don't like it at all. When you tell me that our state organism is a bad one, there I agree with you. When I go out to die for the state, I have a right to ask you who are sending me to death, are you armed with a statesman's wisdom? Can I shed my blood for my country without misgivings? I know, my dear Katia, that the government has not got rid of its old evil habit of treating the Unions of Zemstvos and Towns with suspicion, but it is perfectly clear that without public support, they are unable to carry on. We first seize on a finger and then take the whole hand. I am very optimistic." Nikolai Ivanovitch rose from the table, took a box of matches from the fireplace and while standing, lighted a cigarette, throwing the burnt match into his egg-shell. "Blood will not have been shed in vain. At the end of the war, in place of brutal officials and the Tsar's bureaucrats, you will have our public-spirited worker. What 'Zemla and Volia' failed to do and the revolutionaries and the Marxists, will be accomplished by the war. Good-bye, girls."

He pulled down his coat and went out. The back view of him was like a woman disguised.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna sighed, went into her own room and sat down to her knitting. Dasha sat on the arm of her chair and put her arm about her sister's shoulders. Both were attired in black, high-necked dresses and, sit-

ting quietly and silently as they were, the resemblance between them was striking. Outside the window, a steady snow fell and the bright snowy light was reflected on the walls of the room. Dasha pressed her cheek against her sister's hair, which smelt strongly of some unfamiliar perfume.

"How did you live all this time, Katia?" she asked; "you have not told me anything."

"What is there to tell, Kitten? I wrote to you."

"I don't understand, Katia. You are handsome and charming and kind; I don't know any woman as nice as you; yet I have never seen you happy once. Why is it? Your eyes are always sad."

"I must have a sad heart."

"I'm speaking seriously."

"I always wonder at it myself. I suppose when a person has everything, he can be really unhappy. I've got a good husband, a nice sister, freedom, youth, everything. Yet, when I was in Paris it seemed to me that I was living in a glass jar and suffocating. I only realized it there. 'Heavens!' I used to think. 'If I could only live in some quiet little town and look after the fowls and the kitchen garden and run round to a friend in the evening on the river. It is so long since I've walked barefoot on the ground. I don't love any one; I can't, I suppose. I am like a person dead. My life is finished, Dasha."

"What nonsense you are talking."

"I am a living being, but I live as in a mirage and I am myself but a ghost. I am only conscious of one thing. No matter how much you deck yourself out and exert yourself, you will have to die all the same. Today I feel desperate. I sometimes see a striped mattress, a slipping

sheet, a basin full of gall on the floor and myself lying dead and yellow and grey-haired. . . ."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna put down her knitting and gazed at the snow-flakes that fell in the calm stillness. Her blue eyes were transparent. In the distance, a flock of daws, looking like a cloud of dark leaves, were circling round a crooked, golden eagle on a Kremlin spire.

"I remember getting up early one morning, Dasha. From my balcony I could see Paris in a blue mist and white and grey and blue smoke was rising everywhere. In the street were children with their books and women with baskets. The provision shops were being opened. It seemed so solid and lasting. I wanted to go down and mix with the crowd. I wanted to meet some man with kind eyes and put my head on his breast and say to him, 'Take me, love me,' but when I got down to the big boulevards, the town had already gone mad. Newspaper boys were rushing about and all over the place were crowds of excited people. In every one's eyes there was fear of death and hatred. The war had begun. Since then I only hear of death, death, death. . . . What is there to live for?"

"Katia?" Dasha said after a pause.

"What is it, my dear?"

"How do you and Nikolai get on?"

"I can't say. It seems we have forgiven each other. It's three days now and he has been very kind to me. Who bothers about a woman's trouble now? You may suffer and go mad, and who cares? You may buzz about like a midge, but you will hardly hear the noise you are making. I envy old women. Things are so simple for them. Death is soon to come and they have only to prepare for it."

Dasha shifted in her seat. She gave several deep

sighs and took her arm from Katia's shoulders. Ekaterina Dmitrievna said gently:

"Nikolai has told me that you are engaged. Is it true? My poor dear!"

She took Dasha's hand and kissed it, then she laid it on her breast and began to caress it. "If you love him very much, there is nothing else in the world that you need."

Again the sisters were silent, gazing out of the window at the falling snow. Down the street, among the snow-heaps, a group of military cadets filed by, slipping over the snow. They carried bath-brushes and clean linen under their arms, evidently on their way to the baths. They sang in chorus as they passed, to the accompaniment of whistling:

"Rise up, ye hawks, like the eagle; cast your shadow forth. . . ."

"If Ivan Ilyitch has lost his arms or his legs," Dasha said with a frown, "I will love him all the more. He must be happy, above everything."

After a few days' absence Dasha again began her work at the hospital. Ekaterina Dmitrievna remained alone in the flat, in which everything was strange to her. On the wall were two dull landscapes, depicting a hayrick, some thawing water and bare birch trees. Over the sofa in the drawing-room was an unfamiliar photograph of a plain woman, two boy cadets and a general in glasses. On a small stand in a corner lay a dusty bunch of feather-grass, brought long ago, no doubt, with some koumiss from the steppes. Ekaterina Dmitrievna made an attempt to go to the theatre, where veteran actors

were playing Ostrovsky. She tried picture exhibitions and museums, but she found it all dull and colourless, only half alive, while she herself was no more than a shadow, wandering through a life long abandoned by every one.

For hours she would sit at the window by the radiator, gazing out at tranquil, snowy Moscow, where a melancholy ringing of bells was borne through the soft air and the falling snow. It was a burial service of some one brought back from the front, no doubt. Her book would fall from her hands. What was the use of dreaming? Former dreams and former thoughts were wrong and futile now.

The time flew quickly from morning paper to morning paper. Ekaterina Dmitrievna perceived that everybody around her lived in the future only, in some imaginable days of victory and peace. Everything that heightened people's expectations was hailed with a wild joy and failures made them clench their teeth. People were distracted like maniacs. They caught eagerly at rumours, snatches of sentences, improbable news, growing excited over newspaper phrases. And all the while you might have banged your head against a stone in the Theatre Square and no one would have paid any heed.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna resolved to talk to her husband, and persuaded him to find her some work. Early in March she commenced work in the same hospital as Dasha.

At first, just as Dasha, she felt a revulsion against the dirt and the suffering, but she managed to master herself and grew to take an interest in the work. This mastering of herself gave her pleasure. She felt the nearness of life around her; it was like a running stream

in the desert. She came to like the hard and dirty work and began to pity those for whom she did it. Once she said to Dasha:

"I wonder whose idea it was that we must live a special and refined life? At bottom, you and I are just women. What we want are simpler husbands, more children and to be nearer to the grass. . . ."

During Passion Week, the sisters prepared for the sacrament at a church on the Rjevsky. Ekaterina Dmitrievna took the hospital Easter cake to be blessed and they broke their fast at the hospital. Nikolai Ivanovitch had a special meeting that night and he called for the sisters in a car at three o'clock in the morning. Ekaterina Dmitrievna declared that neither she nor Dasha was sleepy and asked to be taken for a drive. It was stupid, but the chauffeur was given a glass of brandy and they drove out to the Holinsky Fields.

There was a slight frost and the cheeks tingled with the cold. The sky was cloudless and a few bright stars shone here and there. The ice crunched beneath the wheels. Katia and Dasha were both in white shawls and grey coats and sat close together in the deep seat of the car. Nikolai Ivanovitch, who was sitting with the chauffeur, kept turning round to look at them. Both were dark-browed, dark-eyed and white.

"Upon my word, I can't tell which of you is my wife."

"You'll never guess," one of them replied, and both laughed.

Above the huge, dark fields the edge of the sky began to turn green and in the distance was the dark outline of a wood.

"One does want to love, Katia," Dasha said. Ekaterina Dmitrievna pressed her hand and her eyes filled with

tears. Above the wood, in the watery green of the dawn, a large star shimmered.

"I forgot to tell you, Katia," said Nikolai Ivanovitch, turning round in his seat, "our chief, Chumakov, has just come back and he tells us that the position in Galicia is very serious. The German firing is so terrific that whole regiments are wiped out. And as for us, we haven't shells enough, if you please! The devil knows what's the matter!"

Katia did not reply; she merely raised her eyes to the stars. Dasha pressed her cheek against Katia's shoulder. Nikolai Ivanovitch invoked the devil once again and told the chauffeur to turn back home.

On the third day of the holidays, Ekaterina Dmitrievna began to feel ill and went to bed, not able to go to the hospital.

It turned out that she had inflammation of the lungs.

XIX

"What a mess we're in, to be sure! It's too horrible to think about!"

"You've swelled yourself by the fire long enough. Go to sleep."

"What a mess, indeed! Russia is lost, brothers."

By the mud wall of a thatch-roofed shed, sheaf-like in shape, three soldiers were sitting round the smouldering fire. One of them had hung the strips of linen, which he wore in place of socks, to dry on a prop, and he kept watching to see that they did not steam; another was putting a patch on his pants, carefully drawing out the thread; the third was sitting cross-legged on the ground, his hands thrust into the deep pockets of his coat. He was pock-marked and long-nosed, had a thin, black beard and was staring at the fire with deep-sunk, wild eyes.

"We're betrayed in everything; that's the condition we're in," he said quietly. "We no sooner turn the scale than we are ordered to retreat. We hear of Jews being hanged on trees, but treachery is safely lodged at the top."

"I'm sick of the war, but you won't read that in the newspapers," remarked the man who was drying the pieces of linen, as he carefully put a dry branch on the fire. "We advance and retreat and advance again, and so it goes on and we get back again to where we were. No result whatever," he said with satisfaction. "We've strewn the place with muck. The women round about are all pregnant. It makes you sick."

"The other day Ensign Jadov fastened on me," the man patching the pants said, with a sneer, not raising his head. "That's all very well. He's so fed up that the devil gives him no peace. Why had I got holes in my pants, he began, and why was I not standing right? And it ended by his giving me a punch in the jaw."

"No rifles, nothing to fire with," said the man who was drying the pieces of linen. "In our battery, they have only seven shells to the gun. That's why they've nothing better to do than to smash us in the jaw."

The man patching looked up in surprise and shook his head. "Well, well!"

"The whole people are in arms," the dark man said. "They are taking men of forty-three. You could march through the world with such a force. Are we shirking? Let them do their part and we'll do ours."

"True." The man patching nodded approvingly.

"Near Warsaw I saw a field," the dark man continued, "with some five or six thousand Siberian shooters stretched on it. To come all the way to fall under the machine-guns! If you mow down rye, you gather it afterwards. At the military council in Warsaw they decide this and that and some general comes out instantly and away goes a telegram to Berlin. Don't you see? Two Siberian corps marched straight from the station to that field to fall under the machine-guns. It's no use your telling me that you were hit in the jaw. If I didn't yoke the horse properly, my father used to hit me in the face. And he was right, too. I had to learn and to know fear. But why did they mow down the Siberian shooters like sheep? I will tell you, brothers. Russia is lost. We have been betrayed. And it was a peasant who betrayed. A man from my own village, Pokrovsky. He used to be a saddler. I won't mention his name. He couldn't read

and write, just as I can't. He was a blackguard and a scoundrel, too lazy to work.

"He used to steal horses and drag himself about the hermitages; was fond of women and vodka. And now he's in Petersburg, like a Tsar. Ministers and generals and devils are whirling about him. The devil is in everything there. I heard that when a priest had his cassock pulled off, they found a tail underneath. And they put seed into the communion wine. While we're being hacked about and thousands of us are lying in the grey earth, in Petersburg electric light is burning gaily all over the town. They eat and drink and every house has a ball going on. Women are naked too here. . . . Money has been brought from Germany in three submarines; I know that for a fact. I can't raise my arm to cross myself for it's as stiff as a stone."

He ceased suddenly. It was still and damp. The horses could be heard munching in the shed and one of them kicked loudly against the wall. A night-bird swept from the roof to the light and disappeared with a plaintive cry. Suddenly, from the distance, came a shriek that rent the sky; it grew nearer, like some vast monster, flying with incredible speed and tearing the darkness with its wing. The monster dropped and some way behind the shed, a shell burst and the ground shook. The horses tore at their halters. The man mending the pants, said cautiously:

"What a stir!"

"What a gun!"

"Quiet."

All three raised their heads. In the starless sky, another sound grew and lingered, it seemed for a moment or two, and then, near this side of the shed, came the thunder of a second explosion. The cones fell from the fir trees and the ground trembled. The flight of a third

shell was heard. It came with a muffled, lingering sound, that was so terrible that the heart stopped. The dark man got up from the ground and backed away. Above, the sound swelled and flew like invisible lightning. There was a tearing noise and a black, fiery column of smoke and earth rose high.

When the column had collapsed, of the spot where the men had been sitting round the fire, there remained nothing but a deep hole. Above the twisted wall of the shed, the straw roof sent up clouds of yellow smoke. A black, long-maned horse rushed out, snorting, from the flames and reared at the pines standing out of the darkness.

From behind the peaked edge of the valley, the dawn peeped; guns roared; long worm-like rockets rose high and their fire, which fell slowly, lighted up the dark, damp earth. Thundering explosions followed each other. The enemy was getting ready to advance.

XX

Not far from the shed, that evening, the officers of one of the companies of the Usolsky regiment had arranged a party in the officers' dugout, in honour of Captain Tetkin, who had been informed of the birth of a son. Deep beneath the ground, in a low dugout lighted up by several tallow candles stuck in a glass, at a table sat seven officers, a medical man and three nurses from a "flying" hospital.

Much drink had been consumed. The happy father, Captain Tetkin, was asleep with his face buried in his arm and a dirty hand against his bald head. In the stuffy air and the spirit fumes and the soft light cast by the candles, the nurses seemed very pretty. They wore grey dresses and grey kerchiefs. One was called Mushka; she had curls on her temples, laughed incessantly, throwing back her head and exposing her white throat, at which two of her neighbors and two men sitting opposite, stared, heavy-eyed. Another, called Maria Ivanovna, was a stout girl with red cheeks, who sang gipsy ballads well. The audience was beside itself. The men banged the table and said, "Damn it, that was the life!" The third nurse was Elisaveta Kievna. The light from the candles quivered in her eyes and her face shone white, seeming like a white patch emerging from the smoke. To one of her neighbours, Ensign Jadov, it appeared terribly beautiful. He was a broad-shouldered man, red-haired and clean-shaven, with a crooked smile and bright, transparent eyes. He sat bolt upright, his belt pulled tight, drinking heavily

and growing paler. When Mushka, the black-haired, dropped asleep like a sack and Maria Ivanovna had taken up her guitar and wiped her face with a crumpled pocket-handkerchief and stuck out her double chin and begun to sing in a deep voice, "In the steppes of Moldavia was I born," Jadov's straight-cut thin lips smiled slowly and he poured himself out another glass of spirits.

Elisaveta Kievna stared at his clean-shaven face without a wrinkle with a feeling of unutterable sadness.

He entertained her with decent conversation and among other things told her that a certain Captain Martinov in his regiment was reputed to be a fatalist. In fact, when he had had a glass of brandy, he would go up at night to the wire defences of the enemy trenches and abuse the Germans in four different languages. A few days ago he had paid for his vanity with a wound in his stomach. Elisaveta Kievna sighed and remarked that Captain Martinov was a hero. Jadov smiled.

"There are vain men and fools, but there are no heroes."

"But when you go out to an attack, isn't that heroism?"

"You don't go to the attack, in the first place; you are forced to go. And the men who go are cowards. Of course, there are men who will risk their lives without being forced to, but these are men who have an organic desire to kill." Jadov drummed his fingers on the table.

"You mean, degenerates."

"Not degenerate, by any means. Men, if you like, who are at the height of human consciousness."

He rose lightly, took a box of sweets from the other end of the table and offered it to Elisaveta Kievna.

"No, thank you," she said, feeling her whole body grow limp.

"And you? Tell me."

"What about me?" he said sharply. "Yesterday, I met a Jew behind a shed. Would you like to hear? Would it be pleasant or otherwise? What utter nonsense!"

He put a cigarette in his mouth and struck a match. His flat fingers were firm, but the cigarette did not come near the flame and remained unlighted.

"I am sorry, I am drunk," he said, throwing away the match, which had burned down to his finger-nails. "Let us go into the air."

Elisaveta Kievna rose, as though in sleep, and followed him to the aperture leading out of the dugout. Lively, drunken voices called after them and Maria Ivanovna struck up her guitar and sang in a bass voice, "The night heaved with the triumph of passion."

Outside there was a strong smell of decay and the night was dark and still. Jadov walked quickly over the damp grass, his hands thrust into his pockets. Elisaveta Kievna followed a little behind him and while feeling immeasurably offended at this, she did not cease to smile. Suddenly, Jadov stopped and asked abruptly:

"Well, and what now?"

Her ears burned. Controlling a spasm in her throat, she replied in a scarcely audible voice:

"I don't know."

"Come." He turned towards a dark, high-roofed shed, but after a few paces, he stopped and took her hand. It was like ice.

"I am made like a god," he announced with unexpected passion. "I can break a twenty-kopeck piece. I see through people like a glass. . . . I hate them." He hesitated as though trying to recollect something and stamped his foot. "All this laughing and singing and frightened talk is hateful. They are like worms writhing

in warm manure. They see only as far as my feet. I will crush them. . . . Do you hear? I don't love you; I can't ever love you. . . . Don't flatter yourself. . . . But I need you. . . . I hate this feeling of dependence. . . . You ought to understand. . . ." He put his arms under her elbows and pulled her violently towards himself, pressing his dry, fiery lips against her temple.

She made a motion to free herself, but he held her so firmly that her bones cracked. She dropped her head and hung heavily on his arm.

"You are not like the others, not like every one else," he said. "I will teach you. . . ." Suddenly, he stopped and raised his head. A sharp, piercing sound grew in the darkness.

"Damn!" Jadov hissed.

A shell exploded in the distance. Elisaveta Kievna tried to free herself, but Jadov held her close.

"Let me go!" she said desperately.

A second shell burst. Jadov was still muttering something when close to the shed, a black, fiery column flew high, and with a tearing explosion, hot bundles of straw shot out.

Elisaveta Kievna wrenched herself free. She fell and rising with difficulty, rushed to the dugout, deafened as she was. The younger officers had rushed out of the dugout and seeing the flaming shed, began to run, some to the left, towards the copse where the trenches were, others to the right, to the way of communication, leading to the bridge fortifications.

From the other side of the river, far beyond the hills, the German batteries boomed. The firing came from two directions; from the right they fired at the bridge, from the left at the communication trench leading to a farm, which had not long been occupied on that side of the

river by the 6th company of the Usolsky regiment. They were firing, too, at the Russian batteries, which kept up a feeble reply.

Elisaveta Kievna could see Jadov, without his cap and with his hands in his pockets, walking straight across the field to the machine-gun. And suddenly, a black and flaming bush stood out on the place where he had been. Elisaveta Kievna shut her eyes. When she opened them again, she saw Jadov walking leftwards, his elbows moving in their usual way. Captain Tetkin, who was standing by Elisaveta Kievna with his field-glasses, exclaimed angrily:

"I told them we didn't want the damned farm! And now see the way they've smashed the passage, the swine!" And again he held up his field-glasses. "They're firing straight at the farm, the swine! The 6th company is lost!" He turned away and scratched hard at the back of his bare neck. "Shlapkin!"

"Yes, sir," replied a big-nosed, short man in a Caucasian cap.

"Did you get on to the farm?"

"The communications are cut."

"Tell the 7th company to send reinforcements to the farm."

"Yes, sir," Shlapkin replied, respectfully taking his hand from his cap. He walked away a few paces and stopped.

"Ensign Shlapkin!"

"Yes, sir."

"Do as you're told."

"Yes, sir." Shlapkin walked on a few paces further, then bent his head and began to dig the ground with his cane.

"Ensign Shlapkin!"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't you understand the human tongue?"

"I understand right enough."

"Give the order to the 7th company. But you can tell them on your own account that they needn't carry it out. They are not fools enough to send men there now. Let them send some fifteen men to the crossing to return fire. And send word to the division that the 8th company is gallantly forcing the passage. We'll show their losses from the 6th company. Go."

When Elisaveta asked him to let her go to the trenches, he snapped at her.

"You clear out of here, young woman; go to the devil's own mother. Firing will soon begin. I say, doctor, don't gape! Take your people away!"

Just then a shell hissed and struck a tree some twenty paces off.

XXI

Jadov was lying at the crack of a pill-box, not able to tear himself away eagerly watching the fighting through his field-glasses. The pill-box was placed on the slope of a wooded hill. At his feet the inclining river wound. To the right rose clouds of smoke from the bridge which had just caught fire. Behind him, in a grassy bog, was the broken line of trenches, occupied by the men of the Usolsky regiment. To the left of them, a stream wound among the stones and fell into the river; a little more to the left, by the stream, the three buildings of the farm were blazing and behind the latter, in trenches made into an angle, were the men of the 6th company. Three hundred paces away the German lines began, which stretched to the right into the wooded hills.

The flames of the two fires made the river turn a muddy purple and the water boiled from the numerous falling shells and shot up in fountains, surrounded by red and yellow clouds of steam.

The hottest firing was directed on the farm. Above the burning buildings, bursting shrapnel flashed red and on either side of the angle of broken trenches, shaggy, black columns rose high. On the other side of the stream, among the bushes and grass, the flash of rifle firing could be seen.

Boom! boom!

The air shook with the bursting of heavy shells. Ping! ping! the shrapnel beat on the river, on the fields and on the trenches of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th companies. Boom!

boom! rolled a thudering noise from the hills, where, like white lightning, flashed twelve German batteries. Hiss! hiss! our answering shells whistled through the air to the hills.

The noise was ear-splitting and fury rose like a lump beneath the heart.

Thus it continued for a long, long time. Jadov looked at his illuminated watch; it was half-past two. It was getting light and the attack must be expected soon.

And in fact, the thunder of the artillery increased; the water in the river boiled more fiercely and the shells beat on the crossings and hills on this side. Now and again the ground would shake and clay and stones would fall from the walls and ceiling of the pill-box. But it grew quiet in the yard of the burning farm. Suddenly, from the distance, aslant the river, flew the flaming ribbons of dozens of rockets and the earth lighted up as from the sun. When they were extinguished, it was quite dark for some minutes. The Germans got out of their trenches and set off to attack.

In the dim light of the dawn, Jadov at last distinguished moving figures coming over the field, now in a bunch together, now with some getting ahead. Not a single shot came from the farm to meet them. Jadov turned into the pill-box and shouted:

"The strap!"

The machine-gun trembled as with a devilish rage and out spat lead, poisoning the air with vicious fumes. The figures moved faster over the field, some falling down. Soon the field was full of patches of advancing Germans. The foremost of them ran up to the shattered trenches of the 6th company. Faster and faster a crowd gathered at this spot.

The fight for the farm was an insignificant part of

a big battle that was raging on a front of some several hundred versts, which had cost both sides about a milliard of troubles and several hundred thousand lives.

The battle was senseless, because the loss of troops was made good; a new mobilization was carried out, new shells were made, a new batch of paper money issued. Several towns were merely destroyed and hundreds of villages burned to the ground. And once more, both sides began to make ready, as the saying was at the time, to snatch the initiative from the hands of the enemy.

There was no sense in the fight for the farm. The Russians had occupied it about a fortnight back to provide themselves with a jumping-off ground in the event of an advance across the river. The Germans resolved to take it in order to bring their observation point nearer to the river. Neither the one nor the other objective had any importance, except to the commanders of the German and Russian divisions, who had set it down in their wisely thought out strategic plans for the spring campaign.

The commander of the Russian division, General Dobrov, who, six months earlier, with the permission of the All Highest, had changed his former name to the present one, was sitting at a game of preference at the time when the information was received of the German attack on the sector occupied by the Usolsky regiment.

The general left his game of preference and with the senior officers and two adjutants went into the drawing-room, where on a table, lay a topographical map. He had already been informed from the front of the firing on the crossing and bridge. The general realized that the Germans were bent on taking the farm, that is,

the very spot on which he had built his famous plan for an offensive, approved by the corps staff and submitted for approval to the army commander. The German attack upset the whole of his plan.

Every moment telephone messages confirmed the danger. The general took the glasses from his large nose and toying with them, said quietly but firmly:

"Very well, I won't yield a span of the position occupied by my trusted troops."

Instantly telephone messages were sent about the measures to be taken to defend the farm. The 238th Kundrinsky third-class regiment, in the reserve, were ordered to send a strength of two battalions to the crossing to reinforce Tetkin. Just then word was received from the commander of a heavy battery that there were not enough shells, that one gun had been put out of action and that to reply on a requisite scale to the terrific fire of the enemy was absolutely impossible.

At this the general said, looking severely at those present: "Very well. When the shells give out we will fight with side arms." And from the pocket of his grey coat with red lapels, he pulled out a snow-white handkerchief, shook it, wiped his glasses and bent his head over the map.

Just then a young adjutant appeared in the doorway, a cavalryman in a dark khaki coat, which fitted like a glove, with leather belt drawn tight and high in the waist, and wide breeches.

"Your Excellency," he said with a scarcely perceptible smile about his handsome, youthful mouth, "Captain Tetkin has sent word that the 8th Company is gallantly defending the crossing, notwithstanding the destructive fire of the enemy."

The general looked at the officer over the top of his

glasses, made a munching movement with his clean-shaven lips and said: "Very well."

Yet, notwithstanding the cheerful tone, the news from the front became more and more disconcerting. The 238th Kundrinsky regiment had reached the crossing and entrenched. The 8th company continued its gallant attacks, but the position did not improve. The commander of a mortar division, Captain Islambekov, sent word that two of his guns were out of action, and that he had few shells. The commander of the first battalion of the Usolsky regiment, Colonel Borozdin, announced that owing to the exposed position, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th companies sustained heavy losses in men. He therefore asked to be allowed to attack the daring foe, or to retreat to the edge of the wood. There was no information from the 6th company, which occupied the farm.

At half-past three in the morning a military council was summoned. General Dobrov announced that he would march at the head of his trusted troops, but would not yield an inch of the occupied position. At that moment information arrived that the farm was taken and that the 6th company had perished to a man. The general clenched his batiste handkerchief in his fist and shut his eyes. The head of staff, Colonel Svetchin, shrugged his fat shoulders, the blood rushing to his fat, black-bearded face. He said in a precise, hoarse voice:

"Your Excellency, I have always taken the liberty of telling you that the change of position to the right bank was risky. We can put two, three or four battalions on that crossing, but even if we capture the farm, it will be very difficult to hold it. I am against any further fighting for the farm."

"We need the farm—we must have it; we will have it, Colonel," said General Dobrov, the sweat appearing on

his nose. "It is not a question of ambition, but with the loss of the jumping-off ground the whole of my carefully prepared plan for an offensive is reduced to nought."

Colonel Svetchin protested, turning still redder in the face.

"Your Excellency, it is physically impossible for the troops to cross the river under the terrific firing without proper support from our artillery, and you know the artillery has nothing to support them with."

To this the general replied:

"Very well. In that case, inform my troops that on the other side of the river St. George crosses are hanging on the barbed wire. I know my men."

After these words, which should be recorded in history, the general rose, and toying with his glasses in his short fingers, held behind his back, he looked out of the window, whence he could see a damp birch tree, standing in a field, in the soft blue morning mist. A flock of sparrows were seated on its thin, light-green branches. They twittered anxiously and nervously, then rose suddenly and flew away. And the whole of the misty field, with the dim outlines of the trees, was already touched by the slanting, golden rays of the sun.

At sunrise the fighting ceased. The Germans occupied the farm and the left bank of the stream. From the whole of the position in Russian hands, there remained only the hollow on the right side of the stream where the first company was entrenched. The whole of the day a half-hearted cross-firing went on, but it was clear that the 1st company was in danger of envelopment; it had no direct communication with this side of the bank, owing to the destruction of the bridge. The most sensible thing, it would seem, would have been to clear the bog that night.

But in the afternoon the commander of the 1st battalion, Colonel Borozdin, received an order to prepare that night to ford the stream to the bog, to reinforce the position of the 1st company. Captain Tetkin was ordered to collect a strength of the 5th and 7th companies below the farm and to cross on pontoons. The 3rd battalion of the Usolsky regiment, which was in the reserve, had to occupy the position of the attackers, The 238th Kundrinsky regiment had to cross at the narrow place by the burnt crossing and to strike at the front.

The order was a serious one, the disposition clear. The farm was to be surrounded from the right by the 1st and from the left by the 2nd battalion, while the reserve Kundrinsky regiment was to engage the attention and fire of the enemy. The attack was timed to begin after midnight.

At dusk Jadov placed the machine-guns on the crossing, taking one of them on a boat with the greatest caution to a small island of some hundred square feet, which was overgrown with osiers. There Jadov remained. The position was dangerous, but convenient.

The whole day the Russian batteries kept up a half-hearted fire, the Germans replying in the same way. At sunset the artillery firing ceased, only here and there on the river solitary rifle shots could be heard. At midnight, in silence, there began a movement of troops from three places at once. To engage the attention of the enemy, the units of the Kundrinsky regiment, which were in position five miles higher up the river, opened a lively firing. The Germans were put on the alert, but were silent. Parting the osier branches, which were covered with cobwebs, Jadov watched the crossing. On the right, a yellow star hung motionless above the jagged hills and its dim reflection trembled on the glossy, convex

surface of the water. This line of light was broken by dark objects cutting across it. On islets and shallows, running figures could be seen. Some ten of them walked with a subdued splashing in the water to the chest, their rifles and cartridge cases held in uplifted hands. These were the Kundrinsky men fording across.

Suddenly, from the side of the river, a rapid firing began. Shells hissed and flew and with a metallic sound, shrapnel burst high above the river. Each explosion lighted up the white, bearded faces held out of the water. The shallows swarmed with running men. Boom! boom! boom! a fresh round began. Cries could be heard. Rockets, with their blinding fires, flew up over the whole sky. The Russian batteries thundered. The current brought a struggling man to Jadov's feet. "My head—my head is hit!" he repeated in a choking voice, catching at the osiers. Jadov ran across to the other side of the island. In the distance, pontoons filled with men, moved across the river and the units which had crossed already could be seen running up the field. Instantly, just as yesterday, over river and crossings and hills, came a deafening, blinding hurricane of fire. The boiling water seemed full of writhing worms. Through black and yellow clouds of smoke, among the water posts, men crawled and screamed and struggled. Those who had reached the other side were crawling up the bank, others, behind them, clutched them by the legs. From the back Jadov's machine-gun pealed. Russian shells burst in front. The two companies, led by Captain Tetkin, were subjected to the cross-firing from the farm. The advance units of the Kundrinsky regiment, which had lost half its strength at the crossing, as it turned out afterwards, would have gone on with bayonets, but were unable to hold out and lay down by the barbed wire. From

the stream, in mass formation, came the men of the 1st battalion. The Germans rushed out of their trenches.

Jadov was lying by the machine-gun, clutching the wildly agitated lock and sending forth a level fire at the grassy slope at the back of the German trenches, down which men ran in twos and threes and then in larger groups. Invariably, they all stumbled and fell over on their sides.

"Fifty-eight, sixty," Jadov counted. A wretched figure rose, clutched its head and dragged itself down the slope. Jadov carefully adjusted the aim of the machine gun and the figure dropped to its knees and fell. "Sixty-one." Suddenly a blinding, burning light flashed before his eyes. Jadov felt himself rise in the air and a sharp pain tore at his arm.

The farm and all the trenches adjoining it were captured and some two hundred Germans were taken prisoner. At daybreak the artillery fire on both sides ceased. They began to collect the killed and wounded. When searching the islets the ambulance men found in a broken osier bush, a machine-gun, turned upside down and in the sand near by a private, with the back of his head blown away. Some twenty feet away, on the other side of the island, Jadov lay with his legs in the water. He groaned when they lifted him. From his sleeve, matted with blood, a piece of bone projected.

When Jadov was taken to the "flying" hospital, the doctor called to Elisaveta Kievna. "They have brought your hero. Get him on the operating table at once." Jadov lay unconscious, with swollen nose and blackened mouth. When his shirt was removed Elisaveta Kievna saw on his broad, white chest a tattoo of monkeys clutching their tails. During the operation he ground his teeth

and his face was convulsed. When the torture was over and he had been bandaged he opened his eyes. Elisaveta Kievna bent over him.

"Sixty-one," he said.

He continued to wander till morning, when he fell fast asleep.

Elisaveta Kievna asked permission to take him herself to the big hospital attached to the division staff.

XXII

Dasha went into the dining-room and stopped by the table. Nikolai Ivanovitch and Dmitri Stepanovitch, who had been summoned from Samara by urgent telegram three days back, were both silent. Holding her white shawl to her chin, Dasha looked at her father's red face and unkempt hair as he sat cross-legged, at Nikolai Ivanovitch's drooping, swollen eyelids, and dropped into a chair. With eyes full of tears she gazed out of the window into the twilight, at the bright, narrow crescent of the moon.

Dmitri Stepanovitch was smoking and scattering ash over his rough waistcoat. Nikolai Ivanovitch, with his fingers, was toying with a little heap of crumbs on the tablecloth. They sat silent for a long time. At last Nikolai Ivanovitch said in a choking voice:

"Why has every one left her? It isn't right."

"You sit still, I'll go," Dasha said, rising. She was past feeling pain or fatigue. "Father, give her another injection," she said, covering her mouth with her shawl. Dmitri Stepanovitch snorted loudly and threw the end of his cigarette over his shoulder. The floor about him was strewn with cigarette ends.

"Father, do give her another injection, I implore you!"

At this Nikolai Ivanovitch exclaimed in an irritable theatrical voice:

"She can't exist merely on camphor! She will die, Dasha."

Dasha turned quickly towards him. Her tears were instantly dried.

"Don't you dare say that!" she cried. "Don't you dare! She won't die!"

Nikolai Ivanovitch's yellow face twitched. He turned to the window and also gazed at the clear, fine crescent of the moon in the blue void.

"What misery!" he said. "If she goes . . . I can't. . . ."

Dasha passed through the drawing-room on tiptoe, looked once more at the blue window, at the eternal, icy cold without and slipped into Katia's bedroom, where a night-light burned dimly.

At the bottom of the room, on a yellow wooden bedstead, on the pillows, just as immovable as before, lay the small face, with the dry, dark hair thrown back and the palm of a hand below it. Dasha dropped on her knees by the bed. Katia's breathing was scarcely audible. After a while, she asked in a soft, plaintive voice:

"What is the time?"

"Eight, Katia."

Katia breathed and asked again, plaintively:

"What is the time?"

She had repeated the question the whole of the day. Her half-transparent face was calm, her eyes shut. . . . It was such a long, long time that she had been walking over a soft carpet, down a long narrow corridor. The walls and the ceiling, the whole of it was yellow. To the right, from the high, dusty windows, a yellow, tormenting light poured in. To the left were many flat doors. On the other side of them, if they were to open, was the end of the earth, a chasm. In the darkness, deep down, hung the red crescent of the moon. As in a

dream, Katia was walking slowly, slowly past these doors and dusty windows. In front of her stretched the long, flat corridor, bathed in yellow light. It was close and deadly despair was wafted from each door. When will it end, oh, God? At the end she knew was a watery, greenish meadow, with watery branches hanging to the ground. It seemed to her she could almost hear the birds sing. She must stop and listen. . . . No, she could not hear them. . . . And from the other side of the doors, from the darkness, a humming began, a slow, low sound, like the spring of a hanging clock. . . . That misery! . . . If only she could wake . . . say some simple, human thing. . . .

And again she asked persistently, as though complaining: "What is the time?"

"Katia, what do you want to know?"

"Good. Dasha was there." . . . And again the soft closeness and the corridor carpet stretching beneath the feet and the hard, stifling light pouring in from the dusty windows and in the distance the humming of a clock spring. . . .

"If only I didn't hear . . . or see, or feel. . . . If I could lie down and curl up. . . . If only the end would come. . . . But Dasha disturbs me; she won't let me lose consciousness. . . . She holds my head, kisses me and mumbles and mumbles. Something vital comes from her and enters my hollow, light body. . . . How unpleasant. . . . How can I tell her that it is easier to die than to feel this living force? . . . If she would only let me go."

"I love you, Katia, I love you, do you hear me?"

"She won't let me go. She is sorry for me. I mustn't, I suppose. The child will be left quite alone."

"Dasha!"

"What is it? What is it?"

"I won't die, I shall get better."

That must be her father approaching, for he smells of tobacco. He is bending over her and putting back the blanket. The needle enters her breast with a sweet pain. A soothing, restful feeling flows through her veins. The walls of the yellow corridor tremble and part; she can feel the cool air. Dasha is caressing her hand, which is lying on the counterpane; she is kissing it and feels warm. Another moment and her body will dissolve in the sweet darkness of sleep. But again, hard, yellow little demons swim before her eyes. Chirp, chirp. Self-satisfied, they lead their own existence and multiply and build that cursed, stifling corridor. . . .

"Dasha, Dasha, don't let me go there!"

Dasha puts her arms about her head. She has lain down beside her on the pillow, is pressing against her, living and strong, and some brutal, burning force emanating from her says, "Live!"

The corridor is now there stretching before her; she must get up and walk along with a hundred-pound weight on each foot. She cannot lie down. Dasha has seized and lifted her and says: "Come!"

Thus, for three days Katia fought with death. She felt Dasha's passionate will constantly. Had it not been for Dasha she would long since have exhausted her strength and sunk.

For the whole evening and the night of the third day Dasha did not leave Katia's bedside. The sisters seemed to have but one being; they felt the same pain and were animated by one will. In the morning Katia began to perspire and turned over on her side. Her breathing was scarcely audible. Dasha called her father in alarm.

They resolved to wait. At seven o'clock Katia sighed and turned over on her other side. The crisis had passed. Katia began to return to life.

For the first time in three days Dasha fell asleep in a chair by the bed. When he heard that Katia was out of danger, Nikolai Ivanovitch seized Dmitri Stepanovitch by his rough waistcoat and sobbed aloud.

The new day began happily. It was warm and sunny, and they all seemed good to one another. A white lilac bush was sent in from the florist's, and was put into the drawing-room. Dasha was conscious that she had snatched Katia from death with her own hands and that she was very near herself to that yellow, thorny doorway leading to darkness, from the end of which a cold eternal blast seemed to come out of the depths. There was nothing on earth dearer than life. She realized this well.

. . . . . .

At the end of May Nikolai Ivanovitch moved Ekaterina Dmitrievna into the country, near Moscow, where he had taken a wooden house with two verandas, one facing a white birchwood of ever-changing green shadows, the other on a slope looking west over rolling fields.

Every evening Dasha and Nikolai Ivanovitch got out of the train on to the primitive platform and walked over the marshy fields. Overhead the midges swarmed, like two clouds of living dust. Then they had to walk uphill and Nikolai Ivanovitch would usually stop, for the seeming purpose of admiring the sunset, and would say, panting:

"How beautiful! damn it!"

Over the darkening, rolling valley, covered here with corn, there with leafy nut and birch copses, shadows lay, the shadows that come at sunset, purple and still and

sterile. In the long forks between them, the evening glow was reflected dimly. Some little way below, in the crook of the stream, a fork of orange could be seen. The frogs croaked merrily. On the flat fields were the darkening forms of hayricks and village roofs. A yellow tongue of flame from a campfire shot up on the bank of a shallow pond. Out there, somewhere beyond the slope and the high hedges, lived the Tushinsky thief. With a prolonged whistle, a train came out of the wood. It was carrying soldiers to the west, into the dim sunset.

Approaching the house along the edge of the wood, Dasha and Nikolai, through the veranda windows, could see a table set and a lamp with a dull globe and some one's shadow moving within. The house dog, Sharik, ran towards them with an affectionate bark, wagging its tail, then it ran away into the wormwood and continued to bark there.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna drummed her fingers on the veranda window; she was not yet allowed out of doors after sunset. Shutting the gate behind him, Nikolai Ivanovitch said: "I think it's a pretty house." They sat down to supper. Ekaterina Dmitrievna related the local news of the day. A mad dog from Tushin had bitten two of the Kishkins' chickens. The Jilkins, who had taken the Simovskys' house, had had their samovar stolen. Matrena, the cook, had again given her boy a hiding. The wretch was quite out of hand and went about other people's gardens, tearing their flowers.

Dasha ate in silence. She was very tired after her day in town. Nikolai Ivanovitch took a bundle of newspapers out of his case and settled down to read, digging his teeth with a toothpick. Every time he came across an unpleasant piece of news he clucked his tongue until

Katia said: "Nikolai, please don't do that!" Dasha went out on the porch and sat down, her chin resting on her hand. She gazed at the darkening plain, at the flames of campfires to be seen here and there and at the awakening bright stars. The garden smelt of newly watered flower-beds.

Nikolai Ivanovitch came out on the veranda, rustling his newspaper, and said:

"The war can't last much longer, for the simple reason that we and the Allies are ruining ourselves."

"Would you like some sour milk?" Katia asked.

"I should like some, if it's cold. How awful! We have lost Lvov and Lublin. The deuce knows what's the matter! How can you fight when traitors plunge a knife into your back? It's incredible!"

"Nikolai, don't cluck your tongue."

"Do leave me alone! If we lose Warsaw, it will be a disgrace. One won't want to live after that. Really, it does seem to me sometimes that it would be best to conclude some kind of an armistice and turn the bayonets on Petersburg."

In the distance the whistle of a train was heard. It rattled over the bridge across the stream in which the sunset had recently been reflected, carrying wounded, no doubt, to Moscow. Nikolai Ivanovitch again rustled his paper.

"Men are sent to the front without rifles. They are sitting in the trenches with sticks. There is one rifle to every five men." He stopped, choking. "Men go out to attack with their sticks only, hoping when a neighbour is killed to get his rifle. Oh, God!"

Dasha left the porch and leaned on the garden gate. The light from the veranda fell on the broken bee-

hives by the fence, on the parched grass on the road. Walking past with head bent, reluctant and miserable, came Petka, Matrena's son, scraping the dust with bare feet. There was nothing for him to do but to return to the kitchen, take his punishment, cry for some minutes and fall asleep.

Dasha went out at the gate and walked down to the stream. Standing on a cliff in the darkness, she listened. From somewhere a pelican murmured, a sound heard only at night. Still murmuring, the pelican flew away and a clump of dry earth from the cliff splashed into the water. On either side were the black outlines of motionless trees. Suddenly the leaves began to rustle sleepily and again it was still. Dasha compressed her lips and turned back. Beneath her feet and catching against her skirt on the dry earth was bitter, fragrant wormwood.

Early in June, on a holiday morning, Dasha rose early and to avoid waking Katia she went into the kitchen to wash. A pile of vegetables, carrots, tomatoes, cauliflower, was lying on the table, and on the top was a green postcard. The greengrocer had, no doubt, brought it from the post office with the newspapers. Matrena's boy, Petka, was sitting in the open doorway, panting in his efforts to tie a hen's foot on to a stick. Matrena herself was hanging kitchen towels on the acacia trees in the garden.

Dasha poured some water, which smelt of the river, into an earthenware basin and let her chemise fall from her shoulder. She looked again at the postcard to see what it was and taking it up with the tips of her wet fingers, she read: "Dear Dasha, I am anxious because

I have not received a single reply to any of my letters. It can't be that they are all lost." . . .

Dasha sank into a chair. Her eyes grew dim and her legs trembled. "My wound has quite healed. I do gymnastics every day and try to keep myself generally fit. I am also trying to learn English and French. The other day they brought a new batch of prisoners here and whom do you think I saw? Akundin. He is an ensign. Got taken prisoner and is very cheerful and pleased with himself. He was in our camp for a week, but they moved him somewhere. It is very strange. I kiss you, Dasha, if you still remember me. I. Teliegin."

Dasha quickly pulled her chemise on her shoulders and bending down read the letter a second time. "If you still remember me." . . . She jumped up and ran into Katia's bedroom and threw back the chintz curtains.

"Katia, read this aloud."

She sat down on Katia's bed and, without waiting for Katia, read the postcard herself and burst into tears, bending her head to her knees. She soon jumped up and clapped her hands.

"Oh, Katia, isn't it awful!"

"But, thank God, he is alive, Dasha."

"I love him. Oh, God, what shall I do? When will the war end?"

Dasha seized the postcard and ran in to Nikolai Ivanovitch. When she had read him the contents, she demanded to know on the spot when the war would end.

"But no one can tell, my dear."

"Then what do you do in that stupid Union of Towns? You only talk nonsense from morning to night. I shall go to Moscow at once to the commander of the troops and I'll ask him. . . ."

"What will you ask him? Ah, Dasha, dear, you must wait."

Nikolai Ivanovitch shrugged his shoulders and made some sound with his lips. Dasha went to Moscow, to the commander of the troops, but when he was informed of her purpose, she was not allowed to see him. She went to the office of a big newspaper and demanded to see the editor and, gazing with hope at his big, sleepy face and bloodshot eye, she asked if there was no way by which she could see the man she was engaged to marry.

The editor spread out his fingers on his chest and sighed deeply.

"And can't you really tell me when the war is going to end?" Dasha asked.

The editor shrugged his fat shoulders, distended his nose, parted his lips and shook his head.

"Thank you," Dasha said. "Good-bye."

For several days Dasha went about in the wildest mood, then she calmed down. In the evening she would retire early to her room, write letters to Ivan Ilyitch and pack parcels to send to him. When Ekaterina Dmitrievna spoke of Teliegin, Dasha would be silent. She gave up her evening walks and stayed at home with Katia, sewing and reading. It was essential to drive all feeling deeply inwards and to cover oneself with the invulnerable skin of workaday life.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna, though fully recovered in health that summer, was low in spirits, like Dasha. Often the sisters would talk of how they and every one just then went about with a weight like a millstone round them. It was hard to wake, hard to walk, hard to think, hard to meet people. You only longed to go to bed and then, worn out, your only joy was to fall asleep, to forget.

There were the Jilkins, who had asked some friends to sample their new jam the other day, and while they were at tea some one brought a newspaper and Jilkin's brother's name was in the list of killed. He had died on the field of glory. The hosts had gone into the house, leaving the guests on the balcony in the twilight to creep away in silence as at a funeral. It was like that everywhere. Living had become dear. The future was dark and hopeless. The Russian army was still retreating, dissolving like wax. Warsaw had been abandoned. Brest-Litovsk had fallen. Spies were caught all over the place. On the river Hinka a robber band had settled in a ravine and for a week the people had been afraid to enter the wood. The keepers had chased them from the ravine; two had been captured, and the third, it was said, had escaped into the Evenigorsky district to clear the houses there.

One morning, on the square outside the Smokovnikovs' house, an izvozchik drove up, standing upright in his droshky. From all over the place peasant women and cooks and children came running up. Something had evidently happened. From all the houses people rushed out at the gates. Matrena came dashing down the garden, wiping her hands as she ran. The izvozchik, a man with a stubbly beard, hot and red in the face, was standing in his droshky, saying:

"He was dragged out of his office and torn to pieces. They pulled him along the bridge and threw him into the river. And there are five more Germans hiding in the factory. Silk and velvet are flying about the Lubiansky Square. There is looting all over the town . . . and crowds of people. . . ."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna was alarmed, for Dasha and

Nikolai Ivanovitch were in Moscow. From that direction, in the grey, glowing sky, a black column of smoke rose and spread into a cloud. The fire could be seen from the village square, where groups of peasants stood about. When one of the inhabitants of the bigger houses approached them, conversation ceased. The gentry were looked on either with contempt or with some kind of expectancy. It was as hot as before a storm. A burly peasant without a cap came up to the brick shrine and cried: "They are killing Germans in Moscow!"

At this the women's voices rose. The pregnant grew nervous. The crowd moved towards the shrine. Ekaterina Dmitrievna ran out. The crowd was talking excitedly.

"The Warsaw railway station, they say, has been set on fire by the Germans."

"They've killed about two thousand Germans."

"Not two, but six and a half thousand and thrown them all in the Yows."

"They began with the Germans and then they went on. They say they've cleared the Kusnetsky Bridge."

"It serves them right. They've lived on the sweat of our brow long enough and fattened their stomachs, the swine."

"You can't stop the people."

"But I tell you, there are troops on the Negliny. They've fired on the people three times."

"Of course, it's horrible. You can't allow looting."

"The mayor's head has been smashed."

"What's that you're saying?"

"In the Petersburg Park. By God, it's true. My sister has just come from there. In the park, they say, they found a wireless machine in a house and two spies

with false beards. They killed the five fellows of course."

"They ought to go through all the big houses, that's what they ought to do."

Some village girls came running down the hill on to the Moscow road, carrying empty sacks. The people shouted after them. Ekaterina Dmitrievna asked a handsome old peasant, who was leaning on a staff near by: "Where are the girls going?"

"To loot, dear lady."

Dasha and Nikolai Ivanovitch at last returned about six o'clock. Both were excited and kept interrupting one another as they related what had happened in Moscow. The people had gathered in crowds and broken up German houses and shops. Several houses had been burned to the ground. Mandel's ready-made clothing establishment had been looted. Peasants and women had dressed up in the clothes and sung "God Save the Tsar." The Bekkerovsky piano store on the Kusnetsky had been destroyed. The pianos were chucked out of the second floor window and made into a bonfire. The Lubiansky Square was strewn with medicines and broken glass. It was said there had been cases of murder. The patrols had come out in the afternoon and dispersed the crowds. Just now everything was quiet.

"It is sheer barbarism, of course," said Nikolai Ivanovitch, his eyes blinking with excitement, "but I like the spirit; it shows the power of the people. Today they destroy German shops, and tomorrow they will put up barricades, devil take it. The government purposely permitted this pogrom. It's a fact, I assure you. They wanted the people to let off some of their accumulated wrath. But this kind of business will give them a taste for things more serious, ha, ha!" . . .

That night the Jilkins had their cellar cleared and the Svetchnikovs had all their linen stolen from the attic. Some of the inhabitants had, with their own eyes, seen peasant women with bundles slinking away in the darkness among the trees. The public-house was lighted up until the morning. After a few more weeks had passed the villagers began to whisper among themselves and to stare at the villa people in an incomprehensible way.

Early in August the Smokovnikovs removed to town and Ekaterina Dmitrievna commenced work again at the hospital. Moscow, that autumn, was filled with refugees from Poland. It was impossible to move on the Kusnetsky, Petrovka and Tverskaya. The shops, cafés and theatres were packed and the new phrase "I beg your pardon" was heard everywhere.

The excitement and the luxury, the packed theatres, hotels and brilliantly lighted streets were all a screen to hide the living wall of fourteen million troops, who were shedding their blood.

The military situation was not consoling. At the front and at home they talked of Rasputin's evil influence, of treachery, about the impossibility of carrying on the war unless St. Nicholas worked a miracle.

And then, at a time of depression and corruption, General Russky stopped the advancing German army. On this occasion, Russia was saved.

XXIII

On the slope of a hill beyond the town, in the middle of a neglected vineyard stood a yellow stone house with an ugly square tower. The place was called "Château Caberné." The house was built some thirty years back by Jadov's father, a ruined Orlov landowner. Gathering together the remnants of what had once been a big fortune, he moved to Anap, where he bought a vineyard and built himself a house. A pretty Cossack servant girl bore him a son, whom he named Arkadi. Some eighteen months after his birth, the mother ran away with some Turks on a felucca, to Trebizond, it was said. The boy grew up in the yard, but when his father noticed in him a strong resemblance to himself he took him into the house.

Arkadi was at first afraid of his father and afterwards despised him. He was fond of keeping company with fishermen, hunters, tramps; he fought with daring, could shoot well, swim and sail a boat. After his school examinations, one summer, when he was fifteen, he noticed a girl bathing. She kept diving into the water, turning over and exposing her strong, bare back. She came out of the sea, red-cheeked and plump, sat down on the sand and wrung out her dark hair. Arkadi felt a horrible pain in his heart as he looked at her. He crawled away from the bush behind which he had been hiding and flinging himself on a hot sand dune, he wept with despair, as though his heart would break. He found out where the girl lived. Her name was Alena. He stole

a Caucasian silver belt from his father and made her a present of it. Alena gave herself cheerfully to Arkadi. A miserable period ensued for him, a period of continuous thoughts of the girl he had possessed, of her feminine charms. She assumed monstrous proportions in his imagination. Sometimes he had a desire to beat her out of consciousness, then to go away proud and free. But he met her every evening in a hollow among the dunes and tormented her with his jealousy and greed. Just as Arkadi's mother had done. Alena ran away in the autumn on a felucca. He felt relieved. A clinging weight seemed to have been taken from him but in sleep he wept in his despair, hating himself and resolving to suppress any spark of tenderness he might feel.

The following spring Arkadi gave up school and, with two friends of his, Abhasians, he tramped about the mountains for a year. When he returned home his father was pleased. He did not upbraid him, only remarking: "Aye, my son, a nettle seed will always show itself."

His father's affairs were in a bad way. He had run through his capital and a large portion of the vineyard was sold. Arkadi returned to school and soon after leaving his father died in a fit of delirium tremens. The Japanese war broke out at that time. Arkadi enlisted as a volunteer. He was wounded, promoted to the rank of ensign, and after the war, for three years, he dragged himself about Siberia and China. In business, he was not successful. He had been a commission agent, working for tea and fur merchants. He tried being an insurance agent, a gold digger, a clerk, a smuggler, but his clever schemes, which were always so enthusiastically begun, came to nought, chiefly because those who had anything to do with him mistrusted and feared him. For women he had a great attraction, easily capturing their

imaginations. He was always trying to invent some mystery in life that would be known only to himself. It was this that gave him the idea of tattooing himself. A Japanese in Macedonia was engaged on his skin for a fortnight, and with great skill tattooed in black and red Indian ink seven monkeys in the form of a necklace.

Jadov considered himself a remarkable person. Women who gave themselves to him held him to be a criminal, but could never discover in what his crime consisted. He did not rob or kill, though there would have been nothing easier than to strangle some love-sick merchant's wife bedecked with pearls and diamonds in some hotel beyond the town.

He always went about in a state of restlessness, perpetually wanting to do something, without knowing what. It was only in his cups that he dreamed of some wild debauchery when the reason of his restlessness would be revealed to him, while his head was splitting from the strong drink. He liked to drink when alone behind a locked door. He would pace up and down the room, talking to himself, or throw himself on a couch and dream. A favourite day-dream consisted of a picture of peasants dashing in their carts over stormy autumn trackless fields. They would lash at their horses. Ahead was the outline of a town and hanging over it, clouds of smoke from burning houses. The wind that sweeps over the grass carries the sound of a tocsin bell. There is an insurrection.

But this was mere dreaming, nonsense, the working of his youthful blood. Jadov managed somehow to scrape together some money and two years before the European war he returned to Anap and lived for the time being without any definite occupation.

He made some friends. One was an educated workman named Filka, who worked at a repairing shop and another was a Moscow student named Gvosdik, who earned his living by giving private lessons. It used to be said in the town that they belonged to some secret organization. The friends would meet at the "Château Caberné," in the cellar of which there still remained several barrels of the paternal wine. On autumn nights sometimes they would light a campfire on the top of the tower. At daybreak they used to go bathing, even in winter.

The police grew interested in the doings of the "Château Caberné," and Jadov was summoned to the district head. But just about that time the war began.

Early in the spring of 1916 the inhabitants of Anap once more saw lights in the windows of Jadov's deserted house. It was said that Arkadi Jadov had lost both arms at the war, that he did not go anywhere except on to the shore, and that some remarkable beauty was living with him. In the evenings, Jadov's old friends could be seen coming over the hills to the "Château Caberné." Gvosdik had also just returned a cripple from the war. Then there was Filka and a third man, a newcomer from Petersburg, a futurist poet, Alexander Jirov, who had been exempted from military service. The Anap inhabitants were sure that orgies went on at the "Château Caberné."

One day at dusk a northeast wind bent the bare poplars into bows, shook the frames of Jadov's house and rattled the roof until it seemed that some one must be tramping over the iron. The wind blew in at every crevice, under the doors and down the chimneys. Through the dirty windows the stormy fields could be seen and the bare branches swept above them. Over the

rough sea broken clouds flew swiftly in the distance. It was dull and cold.

Arkadi Jadov was sitting on a small, dirty couch by the wall, drinking red wine. His empty sleeve, once so smart, but now crushed with being lain on, was stuck into the belt of his leather coat. His face was a little puffed, but fresh-coloured and clean-shaven. His hair was smoothed down on either side, but ruffled somewhat at the top.

He was lounging against the back of the couch, his eyes half shut to keep out the smoke of his cigarette, staring at Elisaveta Kievna. He had been silent for a whole hour. He had accustomed her never to begin a conversation on her own account, while he himself could be silent for days. Elisaveta Kievna was attired in a brown woollen dressing-gown, open low at the neck, torn stockings and warm slippers. Her massive hair, twisted round the head, was untidy at the temples.

"What a scarecrow you look, you slut," Jadov said at last, chewing his cigarette. "I hate you."

Elisaveta Kievna turned her head towards him and smiled. She took another cigarette and struck a match to light it. The light shone on her face and Jadov could see the tears rolling down her cheeks. He spat out the end of his cigarette.

"Bring me some more Caberné."

Elisaveta Kievna rose slowly and walked through the cold bare rooms to the spiral staircase. As she walked down the rickety steps she lighted a candle. She went into the cellar, which smelt strongly of mildew and wine. Huge spiders ran over the brick arches; Elisaveta Kievna was mortally afraid of them. She sat down by a barrel and watched the blood-red wine as it poured into the jug. Arkadi would kill her one day, she thought, and

bury her in the cellar beneath the barrels. When in Jadov's presence she dared not indulge in such thoughts, but when alone she took a morbid pleasure in imagining how he would fire, how she would fall and die silently, with a smile on her lips. He would bury her body and sit down by a barrel just as she was doing and watch the thick wine pouring, then, for the first time in his life he would suddenly burst into tears with the agony of it all. These thoughts compensated her for the sufferings she had to endure. She would triumph in the end, not he.

Six months ago, in a hospital in a town behind the firing lines, on a rainy night, when Jadov's amputated arm ached and gnawed, he spoke to Elisaveta Kievna about a wonderful revelation that had come to him during the war. He had realized that just as it was not wrong to take a stick and turn over an ant heap, so with an equal clearness of spirit could one destroy the state, law and religion. A man is born for a short span of life in order freely to develop his genius and his passions. The instinct of the mass is to guard against individuality, to chain its purpose by duties, to make life as flat as a bog, in which all the frogs are equal. There are two laws in life, the law of individual man and the law of mankind, i.e., the law of freedom and the law of equality. To unite the two conceptions was ridiculous, for they were opposite. In the present war humanity was destroying itself for the sake of the state, law and religion. People were easily reverting to the herd, made into regiments, divisions and corps. All were animated by a blind unreasoning hatred and were destroying the enemy because he was different from themselves. In this bloody war men hated every inequality, the very idea of freedom.

Modern civilization had come to this monstrous pass. The state consumed itself for the sake of equality, which was universal slavery. There was only one issue: to destroy to the roots our present world civilization and on the liberated and desolate earth, to begin to live for the sake of oneself.

These ideas seemed miraculous to Elisaveta Kievna. She had at last met a man who had fired her imagination. For hours on end, with burning cheeks, she stared at Jadov's lean and cynical face and listened to his ravings.

When her leave was over and she was compelled to return to the "flying" hospital, Jadov said, "It would be absurd of you to leave me."

"But they won't extend my leave."

"We must be married."

Elisaveta Kievna nodded her consent. They were married in the hospital. In December Jadov was moved to Moscow, where he had another operation performed and early in the spring he came with Elisaveta Kievna to Anap and settled in the "Château Caberné." They had very little money and kept no servants, except an old porter, who used to do their shopping in the town. A long period of hopeless idleness began in that cold, bare, half-ruined house. There was nothing left to talk about and in front of them lay boredom and poverty. A dark door seemed to have slammed behind them.

Elisaveta Kievna tried to fill the emptiness of those terribly long days with her own personality, but in this she succeeded badly. She was ridiculous when she tried to charm, with her untidiness and incapacity. Jadov would taunt her with it and she would think in despair that, notwithstanding her broadness of view, she was very sensitive as a woman.

Lately he had become cruel and would be silent for days, while she found consolation in imagining how he would kill and then, in his hopeless loneliness, would come to love her at last. And yet, she knew that she would not have exchanged for any other life, this life of torment, anxiety and pain, of submission to her husband and rare moments of joy.

Elisaveta Kievna took up the heavy jug when she had filled it and went upstairs. The lamp had not yet been lighted in the room, but visitors were there. Alexander Ivanovitch Jirov and Filka were sitting on the window-sill and Gvosdik, a tall man with a weak back, was pacing from door to window, angrily talking to Jadov.

"The French Revolution let loose individuality and in the fever of romanticism, bourgeois civilization was born. At the end of the century a few individualities, some score of millionaires, attained perfect freedom, but at the price of enslaving the whole world. Your idea of individuality, your king of kings, has been exploded like a soap-bubble. It led nowhere, merely lighting up the dungeons of the penal prisons where we forged our chains. The light of that pernicious torch has been broken. . . . We must uproot the very instinct of separate individuality, the I as I. . . . We must let mankind go back to the herd and we will become its leaders. We must destroy any one who is an inch above the herd." He pointed a bony hand at Jadov: "The whole idea is in that inch and we must lop it off. In the terrible sunset of the age in which we have started on our way, we are enveloped in night. A war was arranged for us. We have been set against each other once more. For the last time they have tried to deceive us damnably. But there are many millions of us and we will survive this war."

He doubled up suddenly and began to cough, a dry, internal cough, which sounded like a bark. He dropped into a chair and shook his hairy head. Filka, who was sitting on the window-sill, began to speak in a thin, soft voice.

"At our works it is only the fools who do not see why the people are shedding their blood and why we are straining our stomachs with overtime. It is an adventure of world capitalism. The people were driven into the war; the chief ring-leaders, the German Emperor, the King of England, the French President, the Austrian Francis Joseph, and our own fool have long settled it among themselves."

"Nonsense," said Gvosdik, breathing hard. "Don't talk such nonsense! But if you mean that their aim is the same, there I agree with you."

"I have every reason for what I say."

Gvosdik rose and poured himself out a glass of wine. His Adam's apple moved up and down as he drank it. Once more he began to pace the room with his flat feet.

"You have come back a stranger, Jadov," he said. "We no longer understand one another. Hear me out. Your analysis is a correct one. In the first place, capitalism had to make a clearance of its accumulated goods; in the second place, capitalism had to crush with a single blow proletarian democracy, which was becoming too dangerous. They have attained their first object with even more success than anticipated. The demands of the war were a hundredfold more than the peace demands. Wagon-loads of goods can be cast into that furnace. As for their second object, they will be broken on that. The ace of hearts will be beaten. It won't be capital that will triumph, but the masses of the people, the ants, social-

ism. A milliard people are living under conditions of military operations and the military socialization of industry. Fifty million men, from the ages of seventeen to forty-five, are in possession of arms. The separation of the working masses of Europe is an artificial one. The workers have learnt to make arms and at a given sign they will stretch out their hands to each other across the trenches. The war will end in revolution, in a world conflagration; the bayonets will be turned on the countries' interiors. And now you come out with your retrograde deduction which is both false and foolish. What is the use of your individual freedom? It is anarchism, madness. The pathos of equality is the issue of the war. You understand what that means. It means a reconstruction of the whole world, of the state and morality. The globe must be turned inside out in order to come but a little nearer to the truth, which is burning in a bloody flame among the masses of the people. Justice! A scabby beggar will rise up on an emperor's throne and cry, 'The world for all!' and the people will bow down before him and kiss his scabs. From cellar and sewer they will drag out a creature, in the last stages of degradation, a creature barely resembling a human being, and according to his pattern they will cut the general level. Where do you come in with your individuality, with your king of kings? They will cut off your head if it sticks up above the others."

Jadov was sprawling on the couch, shifting his cigarette from one side of his mouth to the other. The glow it cast lighted up his sneering lips and his cold nose. Elisaveta Kievna gazed at him from the dark corner in which she sat.

"Drunk and tired as you are," she thought. "I will

undress you and put you to bed. Nobody but I understands your soul. Even though you hate, I shall be true to you till death." Her heart beat fast.

"Supposing," Jadov began, in a low, icy voice, "supposing that your rickety Mitruka, with his jaw smashed at the war, does get up at last and bawl about equality; supposing that he kills his officers, abolishes parliaments and councils of ministers and chops off the head of any one who uses a handkerchief and so on, and that everything in the world is made equal. Supposing it is as you say. But what will you leaders be doing all the time? Will you be brought down to the level of Mitruka, the syphilitic from the sewer, eh?"

Gvosdik replied quickly.

"To pass from war to mutiny, from mutiny to political revolution and further on to social revolution, we must bring out a fourth class, the armed proletariat, which must bear the responsibility for the revolution, assume the dictatorship."

"Then you abandon your idea of levelling down to Mitruka?"

"During the revolution there will not be equality; there will be dictatorship. Revolutionary ideas are implanted in fire and blood, as you ought to know."

"And what will you do with your revolutionary proletariat when the revolution is over? Will you level the whole class to Mitruka, or will you allow your worthy revolutionary aristocracy to remain somehow or other?"

Gvosdik stopped and scratched his beard.

"The proletariat will return to its lathes. . . . Of course you are bound to come in conflict here with human nature, but what are you to do? The tops must be lopped off."

"On one fine day, then, realizing that the revolution is finished, your revolutionary proletariat with the comrade dictators at the head will decree to have itself abolished," Jadov said, "so you would have us believe. But that is not my idea. There is a curious law of nature according to which, the more abstract an idea, the bloodier is its incarnation to life, and it incarnates mathematically, feet upwards. In Jewish cabalistics our world is supposed to be an overturned shadow of God. It is a very old law. When you come to the idea of love and freedom, it is quite clear to what they will lead. You have only to apply such an idea to mankind and fountains of blood will rush to meet you. The time has gone by for your idea of equality. You admit that it must bring bloodshed, and in that, I am at one with you; I give you my hand on it, comrades; I believe in your dictatorship, too, but as to how it will end, about that we had better keep silent. Your son of a dog, your rickety Mitruka, the syphilitic, I loathe and despise from the bottom of my heart. I agree to level him under the rake and to knock him on the head when he cries out. I am ready to make revolution tomorrow morning, if you like, but not for the sake of levelling myself to Mitruka, but for the levelling of Mitruka. . . . I shall be a good master, I promise you."

Jadov lifted his legs and got up. He finished his glass of wine at a gulp and began to pace the room with a light, jerky tread. Elisaveta Kievna watched him from her corner with a beating heart.

"Look at him, the king of kings, the great man, my husband!"

The wind, which had risen with the night, shook the shutters, blew in at every crevice, and howled wildly in the attic.

The friends were silent. Filka got off the window-sill, poured himself out some wine, and turning with the glass in his hand, said to Jadov, in a wheedling tone:

"We want more men like you, Comrade Jadov. God only knows when the revolution will begin or when it will end, and we have no fighters. The people are very ignorant. They only know how to hate, but when it comes to business, they are ready to stab each other in the back. It is a risky business to begin, of course, and there is no one to begin it."

"To begin it, the devil! To begin with three kopecks!" Jadov said, throwing himself down on the couch again. Suddenly he asked in a different tone:

"Alexander Ivanovitch, well now? . . ."

All heads turned to the dark, narrow-shouldered form of Jirov, sitting on the window-sill. He began to fidget. Gvosdik spoke excitedly.

"Comrades, I haven't the party's permission; I can't take part in this business."

"I take the responsibility of it myself," said Jadov; "that's settled and has nothing to do with the party.

"Are you satisfied?"

Gvosdik was silent. Filka spoke in a still more wheedling voice.

"It is a public affair. We agree absolutely, but as for the party, it is doubtful."

Gvosdik drummed his fingers on the table.

"I shall take part in the deliberations as a private person only. I must warn you again that I can't take the responsibility. You must act without me. Filka can do as he likes."

"But will you take the money?" Jadov cried.

"Yes."

"That's all right, then; it's settled, Lisa, bring some more wine."

Elisaveta Kievna took up the jug and walked out. She knew that something important was going on just now, a thing they had been deliberating for five nights.

It began soon after Alexander Jirov had told them about a new acquaintance he had made, Colonel Brissov, the commandant of the Anap garrison, a Vladivostok man, whom he discovered to be an unexpected admirer of the new poetry. A few days later, in a room at the Anap Greek hotel there had been a meeting with the colonel. Jadov, Jirov and Elisaveta Kievna were there. Brissov gave them some genuine crown vodka, read them futurist poems and laughed loudly, stroking his half grey beard on each cheek. There was no end to his good-nature and muddle-headedness.

"I am the last of the Lantsepoups," Brissov had cried, unfastening his sweating khaki coat. "I've got the will in my possession. After the Japanese war, the modern style came into vogue and the Lantsepoups grew degenerate. There used to be a club at Vladivostok at one time. They'd have a glass of vodka for you at every step on the staircase. You ought to have tried the walking up; ha, ha; with thirty-seven steps to get up!"

The colonel, evidently, had no secrets whatever. He told them about "the phenomenal looting that was going on in the newly occupied Turkish regions," and that "a felucca with stolen gold would be coming there in a day or two from Trebizond. I am told they are carrying rice; ha, ha! Rice! And why, may I ask, should they order me to place a military guard for the arrival of a private vessel carrying rice?"

Elisaveta Kievna had guessed that the nocturnal gath-

erings related to the felucca. When she returned with the wine, the visitors had already gone. Jadov was standing by the window.

"They can all talk," he said in a low voice, without turning, "but when it comes to jumping from the word to the deed. . . . You try it. . . ." He turned to his wife. His face was distorted. "The essence is in the jump, not the idea of it. I may break my neck, but I shall jump. The jump is the brave thing. . . . Ideas are ideas. Gvosdik says I am an anarchist. He talks nonsense, like a fool. . . . I want to live. That is the sum total of my philosophy. Quite enough reason to spit on all your laws, God-made and man-made. . . . Why do you stare at me? Yes, I am brave because . . ."

He put out his hand to push Elisaveta Kievna aside, for she had come quite close to him, but she caught at his cold fingers. He suddenly drooped his head.

"What have you decided to do?"

"To rob the felucca with rice tomorrow night."

He repeated the sentence more calmly and with a sneer, then he began to stare at the dark window. Elisaveta Kievna put her arms round his shoulders and pressed her cheek against him. He spoke more quietly.

"There is no justification for the robbery, that is the whole force of it. Had there been I would have refused to have anything to do with it. It is unjustifiable, that's the whole essence, don't you see?"

"Can I come with you tomorrow?"

"Yes. The business is only a beginning, Lisa. It will help me to turn around. I will raise a cry. We shall find friends. We will open the cellars and let man's hatred loose. That will do for the present. Let us go to bed."

The whole of the day a strong, cold wind blew. Jadov went into the town and returned in the evening,

excited and cheerful. At dusk, he walked with Elisaveta Kievna down the hills to the rough, noisy sea. Elisaveta Kievna's teeth chattered. The shore was deserted. The twilight grew thicker. At the place where the dunes came right up to the water, two figures rose from a bush. They were Filka and Alexander Jirov.

"We have left the sloop by the bathing place; it was too shallow to bring it here," Filka said in a whisper.

Jadov did not reply. He walked over the sticky sand, against which the waves were lapping. Walking was difficult, the water coming up higher than the knees. Elisaveta Kievna stumbled against a stump and caught hold of Jirov, who staggered, terrified. His face and thick lips were as white as chalk.

"It's a mad, astounding night," she said.

"Aren't you afraid?" he asked in a whisper.

"What nonsense! On the contrary."

"Do you know that Filka threatened to kill me?"

"Why?"

"If I refused to come with you."

"He was right."

"But, you know. . . ."

By a crooked, creaking bathing-hut, which smelt of sea-weed and decay, a steep-sided sloop rocked to and fro. Jadov was the first to jump into it. He sat down by the rudder.

"Jirov to the prow; Lisa and Filka take the oars!"

It was difficult to get away from the bank; huge breakers kept dashing the sloop on the sands. They were all soaked through. Jirov gave a low cry, holding on to his hat and made a sudden attempt to leave the boat. Jadov stood up and said, "Filka, knock him down with the oar!" and Jirov again huddled up, trembling at the boat's prow.

Elisaveta Kievna pulled strongly at the oars, leaning back with every stroke. Had it not been for her husband she would have cried aloud with joy. The boat now rose at the crest of the noisy waves, now fell between the walls of black water.

Jadov again rose in the stern and looked about him. Some twenty sagenes ahead there rocked the black form of a two-masted felucca. Jadov turned leeward and called to Jirov, "Catch hold of the rope!"

The sloop came close to the body of the felucca, which smelt strongly of hot tar and creaked as it rose and fell with the waves. The wind whistled through the rigging. Alexander Jirov caught hold of the rope with both hands. Filka caught at the rope ladder with the boat-hook. Light as a cat Jadov ran up the ladder and sprang on deck. Filka sprang after him. Elisaveta Kievna put down the oars and looked up. A minute passed, not more, and three sharp reports were heard. Alexander Jirov pressed against the rope and dropped his head. Above, a strange voice cried slowly, "Oh, they've killed me. . . ."

Instantly a bustling began. Three locked figures appeared at the ship's side. One of them hung over. An arm was raised and came down with a heavy blow and a body fell with a heavy thud into the water by the sloop. Elisaveta Kievna, dazed, looked and listened. Jadov came to the ship's side and called:

"Alexander Jirov, come up!"

Jirov hung limp on the rope-ladder. Jadov stretched out a hand and pulled him on deck.

"Lisa, you look after the boat," he said. "We shall soon be through."

In an hour, the sloop pushed away from the felucca, Filka being the only one to row. A small trunk stood

at Elisaveta Kievna's feet. They had found it in a sack of rice. At the bottom of the boat, too, sat Jirov, his face huddled between his raised knees.

They left the sloop by the bathing place and the four of them set out to the "Château Caberné" along the edge of the water, which covered their traces. About half way, red shadows were cast on the sand by their moving figures and the foam of the breakers grew blood-red. Elisaveta Kievna turned. In the distance, among rolling clouds of smoke, the felucca was burning, casting a round glow. Jadov bent forward and shouted, "Run, run! . . ."

XXIV

At the beginning of the winter of 1916, at a time of deep depression and disappointed hopes, the Russian troops unexpectedly attacked and captured the fort of Erzerum. It was a time when the English had undergone military reverses in Mesopotamia and Constantinople and on the western front desperate fighting was going on for the possession of the ferryman's little house of the Yser, when a few metres of blood-stained land captured was held to be a victory, about which the electric currents from the Eiffel Tower were busy sending messages throughout the world.

Under most cruel conditions, the Russian army, in mountain snowstorms and frost, scrambling up frozen rocks, attacked Erzerum and spread throughout the big district of ancient towns abandoned by the Turks.

There was international consternation. A book was hastily published in England about the mysteries of the Russian soul. And in fact, contrary to all logical reasoning, after eighteen months of war, defeat and the loss of seventeen governments, the low morale, economic collapse and political chaos, Russia once more began an advance on the whole of her three thousand versts of front. There was a reaction of new and seemingly inexhaustible strength. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners were moved to the interior of Russia. Austria had received a death-blow, after which she easily fell to pieces. Germany made a secret offer of peace. The value of the ruble rose. Again hopes

were revived that the war would be ended by military force. The "Russian soul" grew popular. Ships were filled with Russian divisions. Peasants from Orlov, Tula and Riasan sang "Nightingale, little bird" in the streets of Salonica, Marseilles and Paris and went into the fight with coarse oaths to save European civilization.

It entered many of their heads at the time that lackeys and dogs and superior officers might knock them about, but that they could not be dispensed with.

Throughout the summer there was an advance in the south to Mesopotamia, Armenia and Asiatic Turkey and in the west to the interior of Galicia. All reserves were called up. Men of forty were taken from field and workshop. In every town supplementary formations were going on. The number of men mobilized approached twenty-four millions. There hung over Germany and the whole of Europe the time-old terror of multitudes of Asiatic hordes.

Moscow was deserted that summer. Like a pump, the war had sucked up all the masculine population. Nikolai Ivanovitch had gone to the front, to Minsk, in the spring and Dasha and Katia lived in the town in a quiet, retired way. There was a great deal of work to do. Sometimes short, sad letters would come from Teliegin. He had made an attempt to escape from captivity, but was caught and removed to a fortress.

At one time a pleasant young man used to call on the sisters. His name was Roshchin; he had only just been made an ensign. He came of a good professorial

family and had known the Smokovnikovs in Petersburg.

Every evening at dusk, a ring would be heard at the front door. Ekaterina Dmitrievna would sigh guardedly and go over to the sideboard to put jam in the dishes and to cut up the lemon for tea. Dasha noticed that when Roshchin came in after the ring, Katia would not immediately turn her head toward him, but would wait a moment and smile in her usual sad and gentle way. Roshchin would bow silently. He was a tall man, with large hands and slow movements. He would sit down slowly by the table and in a calm, low voice, would relate the war news. Katia would sit quietly by the samovar, gazing at his face, and from the solemnity of her eyes and her large pupils, it was clear that she was not listening to his words. When his gaze met hers, Roshchin would immediately bury his cleanshaven face in his large glass and a bead of perspiration would begin to roll down his cheek. Sometimes there would be a long silence at table and Katia would sigh, "Oh, heavens!" and she would colour and smile apologetically. At seven o'clock Roshchin would rise, kiss Katia's hand carefully and Dasha's absently and depart, hitting his shoulder against the doorpost as he went out. His footsteps would long be echoed down the deserted street. Katia would wash the cups, lock the sideboard, and without a word, would go into her own room and turn the key in the lock.

Once, at sunset, Dasha was sitting by the open window. Martins were flying high above the street. Dasha listened to their shrill, crystal-clear voices, thinking that tomorrow would be a hot, fine day, since the martins flew so high. The martins knew nothing about the war, happy birds!

The sun sank. The whole town was bathed in a golden dust, through which the narrow crescent of the moon grew clearer and clearer. People were sitting at gateway and porch. Dasha felt sad and apprehensive. Near by a street-organ struck up in the eternal evening dullness of the lower orders. Dasha leant her elbow on the window-sill. A woman's high voice, which seemed to reach to the very garrets, began to sing "I lived on dry crusts and drank cold water."

Katia approached the back of Dasha's chair and seemed also to be listening, motionless.

"How well she sings that, Katia."

"Why?" Katia burst out in a low, agitated voice; "why have we been afflicted like this? Is it my fault? When will it all end? I shall be an old woman soon. I can't bear it any longer! I can't! . . ." She choked. She was standing by the wall near the curtains, pale, with wrinkles round her mouth, staring at Dasha with dry, clear eyes.

"I can't bear it any more! I can't!" she repeated in a quiet, hoarse voice. "It is never going to end! We shall all be dead! We shall never be happy again. Do you hear her singing? She is burying me alive!"

Dasha put her arms about her sister. She caressed and wanted to soothe her, but Katia stuck out her elbows and repulsed her. She was like stone.

"What is the matter, Katia? My dear, do calm yourself!" But Dasha heard Katia clench her teeth; her hands were like ice. "What has happened? Why are you like this?"

Just then a bell rang in the hall. Katia put her sister aside and stared at the door. Roshchin entered with shaven head. He greeted Dasha with a crooked smile, gave his hand to Katia and frowned when he looked

at her face. Dasha immediately went into the dining-room. As she put the tea things on the table, she heard Katia ask in a restrained, hoarse voice:

"Are you going away?"

"Yes."

"Tomorrow?"

"Yes. Tomorrow morning."

"Where to?"

"To the third army." After a pause, he said:

"The fact is, Ekaterina Dmitrievna, that as we are meeting for the last time I have decided to tell you——"

"No, don't. I know everything. . . . And you know about me. . . ."

"Ekaterina Dmitrievna, you?"

Katia cried desperately.

"You can see for yourself! Do go, I implore you!"

The jam jar in Dasha's hand trembled. There was silence in the drawing-room. At last Katia said quietly:

"God will guard you. . . . Go, Vadim Petrovitch."

"Good-bye."

He sighed gently, then his footsteps were heard and the door banged. Katia came into the dining-room and sat down by the table. She covered her face with her hands and the tear-drops fell between her fingers.

From that day she never spoke a word about the man who had gone. And there was nothing to talk about. Had she the strength she would have wrenched from her heart and forgotten the needless pain, which at twilight had entered her foolish, lovesick heart at such an inconvenient time.

Katia bore her pain bravely, though she would rise in the morning with red eyes and swollen mouth. Roshchin sent a postcard on his journey, giving the sisters his kind

regards. The postcard was put on the mantel-piece, where it became covered with fly marks.

Every evening the sisters would go for a walk in the Tverskaya Boulevard to listen to the music. They would sit down on a bench and watch the boys and the girls in pink dresses and the women and children all strolling beneath the trees. A man in uniform with a bandaged arm would be seen here and there or an invalid on crutches. The Dukhov band would play the waltz "On the Hills of Manchuria." "Tu, tu, tu," a cornet sang sadly, and the sound was borne into the evening sky. Dasha took Katia's hand and kissed it gently.

"Katia," she said, gazing at the setting sun that peeped through the branches, "do you remember the poem, 'Love o' mine unfulfilled, Cooling in my heart'? I believe that if we are brave enough, we shall live to a time when we can love with eyes shut, without thinking and troubling. . . . We know now that there is nothing better on earth than love. I sometimes feel that if Ivan Ilyitch were to come home, he would be a stranger to me. Now I love him in a kind of immaterial way, but I love him well and truly. We shall meet, however, as though we had loved each other in another life. We shall seem kindred and strange to each other at the same time. Don't you think it's a little terrifying? Something is going to happen, I know. I feel at times as if my heart were quite transparent."

Ekaterina Dmitrievna pressed her cheek against Dasha's shoulder and said:

"And my heart is so full of grief and pain that it seems to me quite old. My bloom is over and sterile."

"It's a shame to talk like that, Katia!"

"But we must be brave, my child."

It was on such an evening that a man in uniform sat

down at the other end of their bench. The band was playing an old waltz. The lamps were lighted behind the trees and shone dimly as yet in the half light. The man on the bench stared so hard at Dasha that her neck grew uncomfortable. She turned and suddenly gave a low, frightened cry.

"It can't be!"

Bezsonov was sitting beside her. He was thin and drawn and his leather coat hung on him like a sack. On his cap was a red cross. He rose and bowed silently. Dasha said, "How do you do?" and compressed her lips. Ekaterina Dmitrievna leaned back against the seat in the shadow of Dasha's hat and shut her eyes. Bezsonov stared at the gravel beneath his feet. He seemed either dusty or unwashed, so grey did he look.

"I saw you in the boulevard yesterday and the day before," he said, raising his eyebrows, "but I dared not come near you. . . . I am going to the front to fight tomorrow. You see they've come even to taking me."

"How can you be going to fight when you are in the Red Cross?" Dasha said with sudden irritation.

"I allow the danger is comparatively less. But it's all the same to me whether I am killed or not killed. . . . life is dull, Daria Dmitrievna." He raised his head and looked at her lips with a heavy, dull gaze. "It's so dull with nothing but corpses, corpses and corpses. . . ."

"Do you find that dull?" asked Katia without opening her eyes.

"Very, Ekaterina Dmitrievna. I still retained some sorry hopes. . . . But with all these corpses and corpses, everything has gone to the devil. The civilization we created has turned out futile and illusive. Reality consists of corpses and blood—chaos. To be quite frank with you, Daria Dmitrievna, I sat down here with

the object of asking you to spare me half an hour."

"What for?" Dasha looked at his face, strange and unwholesome with the loose and cynical mouth. It struck her with a force that made her head go round that she was seeing the man for the first time.

"I have thought a great deal about what happened in the Crimea," Bezsonov said, frowning, "and I wanted to talk to you." He slowly felt in the pocket of his leather coat for his cigarette-case. "I wanted to remove certain prejudicial impressions. . . ."

Dasha half closed her eyes. There was no sign of magic attraction in the face. He was simply a man in the street. And she said resolutely:

"I don't think you and I can have anything to talk about."

She turned away. Katia's arm trembled behind her back. Dasha coloured and frowned.

"Good-bye, Alexis Alexeyevitch."

Bezsonov twisted his chapped, tobacco-stained lips into a smile, raised his cap and walked away. Dasha looked at his weak back, at his loose trousers, which seemed to be falling off him, at his heavy dusty boots. Was that indeed Bezsonov, the demon of her girlish nights? She felt a sudden intense pity for him. "Katia, wait for me; I'll be back in a moment." And she ran after Bezsonov. He had turned down a side path. Panting, Dasha caught up with him and touched his sleeve. He turned round and compressed his lips.

"Don't be angry with me, Alexis Alexeyevitch."

"I am not angry. It was you who refused to talk to me."

"It was not that. . . . You misunderstood. I am quite kindly disposed towards you. . . . I wish you all good things. . . . As for what happened between us,

it is not worth bringing that back, is it? There is nothing left of the former. . . . I was much to blame. I am so sorry for you. . . ."

He shrugged his shoulders and stared beyond Dasha at the passers-by with a smile.

"I thank you for your pity."

Dasha sighed. Had Bezsonov been a little boy, she would have taken him home and washed him in warm water and given him sweets to eat and not have let him go until pleasure had shone in his eyes. But as he was, what could she do with him? . . . Inventing his own pain and miserable and hurt and angry.

"Alexis Alexeyevitch, if you would care to, do write to me every day. I will be sure to reply regularly," Dasha said, looking up in his face with the kindliest expression.

He threw back his head and laughed a wooden, cynical laugh.

"Thank you. . . . It is a year now since I've got to hate ink and paper."

He clenched his teeth with a frown, as though he had swallowed some sour substance.

"You must either be a saint or a fool, Daria Dmitrievna. . . . Don't mind what I say. . . . Like an infernal pain you have been sent to torment me in life. . . . For two years now I have lived like a monk. You have it now!"

He made an effort to go, but could not move his feet from the spot. Dasha was standing with bent head. She had understood everything and was sad, but her heart was unclouded. Bezsonov gazed at her bent neck, at her virgin breast, visible through the opening of her white dress. He felt that this must be death.

"Be merciful!" he said, in a soft human voice. "Yes,

yes," she murmured without raising her head, and walked away among the trees. For the last time, Bezsonov, with piercing glance, sought her fair head among the crowd. She did not turn. He rested a hand on a tree and his fingers dug into the green bark. The earth, that last resting place, was giving way beneath his feet.

XXV

The dull disc of the moon hung above the desert peat bogs. The mist curled above the holes and ditches of abandoned trenches. Tree stumps projected everywhere and low-growing charred fir trees. It was damp and still. Across the narrow dam, in single file, horse following horse, the hospital baggage-train trundled along. The front, which was their destination, lay some three versts from the jagged outline of the wood, from whence no sound came.

In one of the carts Bezsonov lay on his back. He was covered with a horse-cloth that smelt of horse sweat. Every evening when the sun set his fever would begin. He shivered and his teeth chattered. The whole of his body seemed to dry up and with a cold effervescence, flitting, changing thoughts whirled clearly in his brain. He felt a wonderful sensation of losing physical substance.

He tucked the horse-cloth up to his chin and gazed at the misty, feverish sky. It was there that his earthly journey ended. Mist and moonlight and the rocking of the wagon like a cradle. Completing the cycle of a century, once more the creaking of Scythian chariots could be heard. Everything that had gone before was a dream, the Petersburg lights, the music in the hot, brilliant halls, a woman's hair flung over a pillow, the dark pupils of her eyes, the mortal despair of her gaze. . . . The dullness, the loneliness. . . . The dim light of his study, the tobacco smoke, the agitated beating of the

heart and intoxication at the birth of words. . . . A girl with white daisies fatally coming in from the lighted hall into his dark room, into his life. . . . And despair, despair, which covered his heart with a cold dust. . . . They were all dreams. . . . The wagon rocks. Beside him walks a bearded peasant with a cap over his eye; he has walked beside that cart for two thousand years. . . . There it lay, the endless stretch of time, in the mist of the moon. . . . Shadows move from the darkness of the ages, carts creak and the world is furrowed in black lines. Once more the Huns are walking over the earth. And in the dim mist, burning columns and smoke stretching to the sky and the creaking and jolting of wheels. And the creaking grows louder and spreads, until the whole sky is filled with the rumbling noise. . . .

Suddenly, the cart stopped. Above the noise which filled the white night, the voices of the men on the baggage-train were heard. Bezsonov raised himself on his elbow. Low above the wood a long body floated. It gleamed and shone in the moonlight. The throbbing of engines grew nearer and louder. A narrow shaft of light shot from its belly and ran across the bog, the stumps, the shattered trees and the fir-bush and struck the road by the wagons.

Above the din, ta, ta, ta, came fainter sounds like the banging of a machine-gun. . . . Men came out of their wagons. The ambulance wagon swerved and rolled over in the bog. . . . About a hundred paces from Bezsonov, on the road, a blinding mass of light shot up. In a dark mass, horse and wagon rose in the air. A huge volume of smoke, a thundering crash and whirlwind and the whole baggage-train pitched forward. Horses with the foreparts of carriages galloped across the bog and

men ran wildly. The wagon on which Bezsonov lay swerved and fell and Bezsonov rolled into a ditch. A heavy sack struck his back; he was completely covered with straw.

The airship dropped another bomb and then the sound of its engines retreated and stopped altogether. Groaning, Bezsonov tried to dig his way out of the straw. With difficulty he crawled from beneath the baggage that had fallen on him. He shook himself and scrambled to the road. A few wagons were standing there with their foreparts gone. On the bog lay a horse in the shaft with its head thrown back, automatically twitching its hind leg. Bezsonov touched his face and forehead. There was a sticky place by his ear. He put his handkerchief on the scratch and walked away down the road towards the wood. From the shock of the fall and the fright his legs trembled so that he soon had to sit down on a rubbish heap. He would have liked some brandy, but the flask had been left with the baggage in the cart. After some difficulty Bezsonov pulled some matches and a pipe out of his pocket and lighted up. The tobacco smoke tasted bitter and nasty. He remembered that he had a fever. He was in a bad plight. At any cost he must reach the wood where he had been told a battery was stationed. He rose, but his legs gave way beneath him. They felt so wooden that they would not move below the knees. He sat down again and rubbed and stretched and pinched them and when he felt them ache, he rose, and walked on.

The moon now stood high and the road, winding through the desert bog, seemed endless. He put his hands on the small of his back and staggered on, with difficulty lifting his heavy boots. Bezsonov began to talk to himself.

"They take you and chuck you out. . . . There, drag yourself along, you dog, until the wheels go over you. . . . And how did I interfere with you, may I ask? All I did was to write verses and seduce stupid women. . . . But they would run after me. . . . And life was so dull. . . . Still, that was my own affair. . . . They take you and chuck you out. . . . Go, drag yourself along the bog and perish. . . . You can protest if you have a mind to. . . . Go on, protest, scream. . . . Scream, scream louder. . . ."

Bezsonov turned suddenly. A grey shadow crept along the road. A cold shiver passed down his spine. He smiled and, shouting detached, incoherent phrases, he walked on in the middle of the road. After a while he turned again. Some fifty paces away a big-headed, long-legged dog slouched after him.

"Damnation!" Bezsonov muttered and walked the faster, casting a glance over his shoulder again. There were five dogs in all, walking in single file, grey, with hanging jaws and backs. Bezsonov threw some stones at them. "I'll . . . Get away, you filthy beasts!"

The animals slouched down to the bog. Bezsonov filled his pockets with stones and threw them from time to time. He walked on whistling and yelling, "Hi! Hi!" The animals came on to the road again and walked in file, without coming any nearer.

On either side of the road a low-growing fir wood commenced and at the bend, Bezsonov caught sight of a human figure in front of him. The figure stopped, glanced around and walked slowly away into the wood.

"Damnation!" Bezsonov swore under his breath and also stepped into the shadow of the wood. He stood still for some time, trying to restrain the violent beating of his heart. The animals, too, stopped some distance

away. The foremost of them lay down with its jaws resting on its paws. The man in front made no movement. Bezsonov saw a white foam-like cloud pass across the moon, then there was a sound like a needle piercing his brain; it was the snap of a dry twig beneath the feet of the man. Bezsonov clenched his hands and in desperation walked out quickly into the middle of the road. A tall soldier was standing to the right of him; he wore a long coat and his long face without any eyebrows seemed dead; it was grey and its mouth was half open.

"Hi! you there!" Bezsonov cried; "what regiment are you from?"

"From the second battery."

"Take me to the battery."

The soldier was silent and made no movement. He looked dully at Bezsonov and turned his face to the left.

"What are those things down there?"

"Dogs," Bezsonov replied impatiently.

"Those aren't dogs."

"Come on, show me the way."

"I won't."

"Look here. I've got a fever. Do show me the way. I'll give you some money."

"I won't." The soldier raised his voice. "I can't go back; I'm a deserter."

"They'll catch you anyhow, you fool."

"Perhaps."

Bezsonov looked over his shoulder. The animals had gone, probably into the wood.

"Is it a long way to the battery?"

The soldier did not reply. Bezsonov turned to go, but the man seized his sleeve by the elbow in fingers as stiff as pincers.

"You're not going there. . . ."

"Let me go!"

"I shan't let you go!" Without releasing his arm, the soldier glanced to the side over the wood. "I haven't eaten a bite for three days. . . . I was asleep in a ditch a short while ago, when I heard some one coming. I thought it must be the patrol, so I lay still. They kept on coming, many of them, coming and coming; they rumbled all along the road. What could it be? I crawled out of the ditch and looked. They walked in shrouds all over the road, no end of them. . . . They swayed like the mist and the ground shook beneath them . . ."

"What are you talking about?" Bezsonov shouted in a wild voice and tried to tear himself away.

"It's the truth I'm telling you and you must believe me, you swine!"

Bezsonov tore his arm away and ran, but his legs seemed to be made of cotton-wool. The soldier ran after him with his heavy boots and panting, seized him by the shoulder. Bezsonov fell and covered his head and neck with his hands. Panting, the soldier bore down on him, extending his stiff fingers to his throat and squeezed it, till it grew silent and cold.

"So that's what you are, are you?" the soldier hissed, The body on the ground shuddered, stretched itself, collapsed and flattened in the dust. The soldier let it go. He got up and put on his cap. Without looking at what he had done, he walked away down the road. He staggered and shaking his head, sat down, his legs dangling in a ditch.

"Oh, death!" he exclaimed slowly. "Oh, God, let me go! . . . It's torture. . . ."

XXVI

After an unlucky attempt to escape from the concentration camp, Ivan Ilyitch was removed to a fortress and placed in solitary confinement. There he planned another escape and for six weeks filed the gratings of his window. At the beginning of the summer, however, the fortress was unexpectedly evacuated and Teliegin found himself in what was known as "The Rotten Hole." It was a horrible, miserable place. On a peat field in a wide valley stood a square of four barracks, surrounded by barbed wire. In the distance, by the hills, where the brick chimneys stood out, there began a single-track railway, the rusty lines of which stretched throughout the marsh and ended near the barracks in a deep hollow, the work of the year before, on which over five thousand Russian soldiers had perished of typhoid and dysentery. On the other side of the dirty yellow valley, the uneven peaks of the purple Carpathians rose high, To the north of the barracks, immediately on the other side of the wire, numerous pine crosses stretched far in the distance across the marsh. The barracks were surrounded by a big yard with a well in the middle of it. Boards were thrown about the place, beneath which the brown liquid mud oozed.

On hot days, steam rose from the valley, gadflies hummed, midges stuck to the face and the red, hazy sun steamed and decomposed that hopeless, desolate place.

The Austrian military authorities intended to clear

"The Rotten Hole" of war prisoners after the epidemic, but pressed as they were by General Brusilov, they evacuated several camps and shoved into the deserted barracks a group of officers, about fifteen hundred men, who had been guilty of insubordination and attempted escape.

The conditions were hard and the food was scarce. At six in the morning a loud drum would be sounded for rising, at seven bread was brought round and coffee made of acorns served without sugar. For lunch and dinner cooked vegetables were allowed. There was a roll-call three times a day and three times during the night. Half the officers were ill with stomach troubles, fevers, ulcers and rashes. In spite of everything, hope ran high in the camp. Brusilov, fighting stubbornly, was advancing, the French were beating the Germans in the Champagne district and at Verdun, and Asia Minor was cleared of Turks. The end of the war seemed to be really in sight. The prisoners in "The Rotten Hole" clenched their teeth and bore their privations.

In the new year they would all be at home.

But the summer had gone and the rains had come; Brusilov had stopped without taking Krakow or Lvov, the fierce battles on the French front had ceased. Alliance and Entente were licking their wounds. Clearly the end of the war had been put off till next autumn.

A period of despair began in "The Rotten Hole." Teliegin's neighbor, Viskoboinikov, left off washing and shaving, lay for days at a time on his bunk with half shut eyes, refusing to answer questions. Now and again he would get up in exasperation and scratch himself viciously with his nails. Red spots would appear and disappear on his body. One night he awoke Ivan Ilyitch and asked in a hushed voice:

"Are you married, Teliegin."

"No."

"I've got a wife and daughter in Tver. You will let them know, won't you?"

"Don't, Jakov Ivanovitch; go to sleep."

At three in the morning Viskoboinikov did not answer the roll-call. He was found in the water-closet, hanging on a thin, leather strap. The whole barrack rose up. The officers crowded round the body, which was lying on its back on the floor. The lantern, which stood at the head, shone on the bony face, distorted by the horrible pain and on his chest, on which, beneath the torn shirt, bloody scratches could be seen. A dirty light fell from the lantern, the faces of the living, bending over the corpse, were swollen and yellow and twisted. One man, Ensign Melshin, turned suddenly in the darkness of the barrack and said aloud, "Are we going to stand this, comrades?"

A murmur rose from the crowd and from the bunks. The entrance door flew open and a sleepy Austrian officer came in, the commandant of the camp. The crowd parted and allowed him to pass to the body. And instantly loud voices were raised.

"We are not going to stand this!"

"The man was tortured."

"That's their system."

"I am also rotting alive."

"We won't stand it, we must be moved from here."

"We are not criminals."

"The devils haven't been beaten enough."

"Silence! To your places!" shouted the commandant, raising himself on tiptoe.

"What? What does he say? Are we to be silent?"

"To your places, you Russian swine!"

Instantly, Sub-Captain Jukov, a short, thick-set man

with a tangled beard, pushed forward and poking a short finger at the Austrian's nose, cried in a wailing voice:

"Do you see this finger, you son of a dog? Do you see it?" And shaking his shaggy head he seized the commandant by the shoulders and shook him viciously. He knocked him down and fell on top of him.

The officers crowded silently round the struggling men. The footsteps of soldiers could be heard running along the boards and the commandant cried for help. Teliegin, who had so far been standing at the back of the crowd, pushed forward saying, "Are you mad? He'll choke him!" and seizing Jukov by the shoulders he tore him away from the Austrian.

"You blackguard!" Teliegin said to the commandant in German. Jukov was panting with wide open mouth.

"Let me go! I'll show the swine!" he said hoarsely. The commandant got up and casting a quick searching glance at the faces of Jukov, Teliegin, Melshin and two or three of the other officers standing near by, he clinked his spurs and walked out of the barrack. The officers wandered about the bunks, some lay down. All was still.

It was clearly a question of mutiny and would be followed by a court martial.

Ivan Ilyitch, as usual, began the day without omitting a single of his self-appointed tasks, which he had been observing now for over a year. At six in the morning he undressed naked, pumped some brownish, muddy water into a pail, sluiced and rubbed himself, did a hundred and one gymnastic exercises, taking care that his muscles cracked, then he dressed and shaved and as there was no coffee that day, he sat down on a hungry stomach to his German grammar. Afterwards he would

usually take a walk, have luncheon, then half an hour's rest, then study English and French, then dinner, then half an hour's game of preference or chess, then another hundred and one gymnastic exercises, then sleep.

Such a regulation of time filled the whole day and left not a spare moment in which to give way to depression. His body and will were hardened, every softening of the spirit he resolutely crushed.

The hardest and most devastating thing of all for the prisoners to bear was continence. Many a man came to grief over it. One man would begin to powder himself and to paint his eyes and eyebrows and go about for days whispering with another fellow powdered like himself. Another man would avoid all contact with his fellows, lie with covered head among the rags, unwashed and unkempt. Another would use filthy language, annoy people with disgusting stories and in the last stages, make such an obscene display that he would be removed to the hospital.

Strictness was the only salvation against these things. During his captivity Teliegin grew very taciturn. His muscular body grew wiry, his movements angular. His eyes lost their lustre and seemed to be paler, animated only by a cold, determined light. In moments of anger they looked terrible.

On that day, Teliegin repeated the German words he had copied more diligently than usual, then he opened a tattered volume of Spielhagen. Jukov came up and sat down beside him on the bunk. Ivan Ilyitch continued to read softly to himself without turning. Jukov sighed.

"I want to make out that I'm mad at the trial, Ivan Ilyitch," he said.

Teliegin gave him a quick look. Jukov's rosy, kindly face, with the broad nose and curly beard and soft warm

lips seen through his big moustache, was hanging guiltily. His fair eyelids blinked.

"What the devil made me go and poke my finger at him? I don't know what I expected to get by it! If you fellows would only curse me instead of being silent! I know it's my fault, Ivan Ilyitch. I would go and poke that finger of mine. I shall say that I'm mad. What do you think?"

"Now look here, Jukov," Teliegin said, shutting his book with a finger inside it, "some of us are bound to be shot. You know that, don't you?"

"I do."

"Then would it not be as well not to play the fool at the trial, eh?"

"You are right."

"We none of us blame you. Only the price to be paid for the pleasure of hitting an Austrian in the jaw is rather a high one."

"And what must I feel about it, Ivan Ilyitch, to have brought this on you?" Jukov waved a clenched fist and shook his hairy head. "If only the swine would bowl me over alone, I shouldn't mind it so much."

Jukov went on talking in this strain for a long time, but Teliegin took no further notice of him and went on reading Spielhagen. After a time he got up and stretched himself, cracking his muscles. The door flew wide open and four soldiers with fixed bayonets came in and placed themselves on either side of the doorway, clinking the bars of their rifles. Immediately there entered a sergeant-major, a gloomy man with a bandaged eye, who stared round the barrack and curled the ends of his moustache. He called out in a hoarse, angry voice, "Sub-Captain Jukov! Lieutenant Melshin! Sub-Lieutenant Ivanov! Sub-Lieutenant Ubeiko! Ensign Teliegin!"

The men whose names had been called came up. The sergeant-major examined them carefully. The soldiers surrounded them and led them across the barrack yard to a small wooden house, where the commandant lived. A newly arrived military car was standing by the door. The spikes covering the entrance of the barbed wire enclosure were removed. A sentry stood by a striped sentry-box. Lounging on the seat at the wheel of the car was a young officer with a swarthy, ape-like face, the large peak of his cap pulled low over one eye. Teliegin touched Melshin's elbow. Melshin was walking beside him.

"Can you drive a car?" Teliegin asked.

"Yes. Why?"

"Sh. . . ."

They were brought to the commandant's house. At a pine-wood table, covered with clean, pink blotting paper, sat three Austrian senior officers, who had just arrived for the trial. One of them, a clean-shaven man with purple patches on his thick neck, was smoking a cigar. Teliegin noticed that he did not even look at the incoming men. His hands were on the table with locked fingers, fat and hairy; his eyes were half closed to shield them from the smoke, his collar dug into his neck. "This man has already made up his mind," Teliegin thought.

The presiding judge was a thin old man with a long, sad face, a few well smoothed wrinkles and a thick, grey moustache. One eyebrow was raised by a monocle. He looked intently at the accused men and, through the monocle, fixed his large grey eye on Teligin. The eye was clear, intelligent and kindly. His moustache trembled and he lowered his head.

"That looks bad," Ivan Ilyitch thought and turned to the third judge, before whom lay a pair of tortoise-

shell spectacles and several square sheets of closely written paper. He was a short man with a yellowish skin, a receding forehead, stubbly hair like a hedgehog's and ears as large as dumplings. He was frowning as from acute indigestion. This officer looked as if he had been unlucky in everything.

When the accused men were placed round the table, he put on his round spectacles, smoothed the sheets of paper with a withered hand, coughed, exposing thereby his false, yellow teeth, and began to read the indictment.

On one side of the table, with twitching eyebrows and compressed lips, sat the commandant. Teliegin strained every effort to follow the words of the indictment, but contrary to his will, his thoughts were working in another direction.

"When the body of the suicide was taken into the barrack, some of the Russians, making this a pretext, incited the others to open rebellion. They swore and used filthy language and shook their fists. Lieutenant Melshin had an open penknife in his hand."

Teliegin could see the boy chauffeur through the window. He was picking his nose, then he turned on the seat and completely covered his face with his cap. Two short soldiers in blue coats approached the car and began to examine it; one man, sittting down, poked the tires with his fingers. They both turned. A kitchen was wheeled into the yard, the smoke rising from its chimney. The kitchen was turned to the barrack and the soldiers lazily followed it. The chauffeur neither moved nor turned. He was probably asleep. Teliegin bit his nails in his impatience. Once more he turned his attention to the prosecutor's rasping voice.

"The said Sub-Captain Jukov, with the obvious intention of threatening the life of the commandant, first

attempted to seize the commandant's nose between his fingers, which act could have had no other purpose than that of casting dishonour on the Imperial Royal uniform. . . ."

At these words, the commandant rose, red in the face, and began to explain the rather incomprehensible tale of Jukov's finger. Jukov attempted to put in a word, looking with a kindly guilty smile at his comrades, but unable to contain himself any longer, he turned to the prosecutor and burst out in Russian:

"Will you allow me to explain, sir? . . . I said to him: 'Why do you treat us like this? Why?' I'm sorry I can't explain in German. . . . And I pointed my finger. . . ."

"Do shut up, Jukov!" Ivan Ilyitch hissed. The president knocked on the table with his pencil. The prosecutor went on reading.

He described how Jukov had seized the commandant and in what particular part of his body and "knocking him on his back, he squeezed his throat with large fingers with intent to cause death." The colonel then went on to the more doubtful part of the indictment. "The Russians, pushing and shouting, egged the murderer on and one of them, Ensign Ivan Teliegin, on hearing the soldiers come running up, dashed with bloodthirsty impatience to the spot, shoved Jukov aside, and but a moment separated the commandant from death." At this point the prosecutor stopped, unable to keep back a smile of self-satisfaction. "But the guard came in just then"—their names followed—"and Teliegin could only shout 'Blackguard!' to his victim."

After this there followed an amusing psychological examination of Teliegin's conduct, "a man who had twice attempted to escape and had not stopped even at filing the bars of his window."

The colonel charged Jukov and Teliegin unconditionally and Melshin, "according to the testimony of the witnesses," with incitement to murder and with flourishing his penknife, and, to give more point to the indictment, he stated that Ivanov and Ubeiko had "acted while in a condition of insanity."

When the prosecutor had finished reading, the commandant confirmed all his statements. The soldiers were examined. In their opinion, the three first charged were guilty, but they did not know about the other two. The president rubbed his hands and suggested that Ivanov and Ubeiko should be acquitted, owing to lack of evidence against them. The red-faced officer, who had by now smoked his cigar down to the very end, nodded his approval, and after some hesitation, the prosecutor also agreed. Two of the convoys shouldered arms.

Teliegin said, "Good-bye, comrades." Ivanov turned green and dropped his head and Ubeiko gazed at Ivan Ilyitch in silent horror. When they had been led out the president turned to the men charged.

"Are you guilty of inciting to mutiny and of attempting to kill the commandant of the camp?" he asked Teliegin.

"No."

"What have you to say in your defence?"

"The indictment is false from beginning to end."

"Have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing."

As he walked away from the table, Teliegin looked intently at Jukov. The latter coloured, but when he was questioned, he replied word for word as Teliegin had done. Melshin also replied in a similar way. The president listened to them, shutting his eyes wearily. The judge at last rose and went into the next room. As he reached

the door, the red-faced officer who was the last to go out, spat out his cigar and stretched himself agreeably.

"There is no doubt that we shall be found guilty. I saw that as soon as we came in," Teliegin whispered and turning to the convoy, asked him for a glass of water.

The soldier walked quickly up to the table, put down his rifle and poured some dirty-looking water from a bottle. Ivan Ilyitch whispered hastily into Melshin's ear.

"When we are led past the car, try and set the engine going. Say something or other to the convoy in Russian and don't mind any untoward movement."

"I follow," Melshin whispered in reply and shut his eyes.

The judges immediately appeared and seated themselves in their former places. The president slowly took off his monocle and holding a crumpled piece of paper which trembled slightly close to his eye, he read the brief sentence, by which Jukov, Teliegin and Melshin were condemned to death by shooting.

Ivan Ilyitch, though he felt sure what the sentence would be beforehand, yet when the words were pronounced, felt sick and the blood rushed from his heart. Jukov dropped his head and Melshin, a tall, big-boned, blue-eyed youth, licked his lips slowly and stepped from one foot to the other.

The president wiped his weary eyes and covered them with the palm of his hand; then he said slowly and distinctly: "The commandant is to carry out the sentence immediately."

The judges rose. The commandant sat for a moment or two longer, green in the face, with outstretched legs; then he, too, rose, and pulling down his spotless uniform, in an exaggeratedly harsh voice, he ordered the

remaining convoys to lead out the condemned men. Teliegin managed to linger in the doorway so as to allow Melshin to pass out first. Melshin, seeming to collapse entirely, caught the convoy by the sleeve and began to jabber to him in Russian:

"Come, please come over there, a little further . . . I've got the stomach-ache, I can't stand it." . . .

The soldier stared at him in astonishment. He gave a frightened glance over his shoulder, at a loss what to do in such a contingency. Melshin, however, had managed to drag him to the front of the car, where he squatted down and made faces and groaned and tore with trembling fingers first at the buttons of his clothes, then at the handle of the car. The convoy's face expressed pity and disgust.

"Got the stomach-ache? Sit down, then!" he said angrily. "Look sharp!"

But Melshin seemed doubled up with the gripes. He ground his teeth and gave a furious turn of the engine handle. The soldier was alarmed and tried to pull him away. The boy chauffeur awoke and jumped out of the car, cursing furiously. Teliegin kept close to the second convoy, keeping a keen lookout on all Melshin's doings. At last the engine began to throb and his own heart beat violently in measure.

"Jukov, you get the rifle!" Teliegin yelled, seizing his convoy round the middle and hurling him to the ground. With a bound he reached the car, where Melshin was struggling with the soldier for the possession of the rifle. Ivan Ilyitch, with the full force of his bound, struck the soldier's neck with his fist. The man groaned and sat down. Melshin dashed to the wheel and pressed the lever. Ivan Ilyitch could see Jukov climbing into the car with the rifle and the chauffeur stealing along the

wall to the commandant's door. A long, distorted face with a monocle appeared at the window, the stubby figure of the commandant dashed out with a revolver in his hand. Then came flash, report, flash, report. . . . "Missed! Missed! Missed!" The heart stopped beating. The wheels of the car seemed to have grown into the ground. At last the engine throbbed, the car moved, Teliegin fell back on the leather seat. They were cutting through the wind more quickly; they had reached the striped sentry-box; the sentry was aiming. Like a storm the car dashed past him. Soldiers rushed out and fell on their knees. "Bang! bang! bang!" came the faint sound of firing. Jukov turned and shook his fist at them. The gloomy square of barracks grew smaller, lower, and the camp was hidden from view at the bend. Posts and trees and the figures on the milestones came rushing toward them.

Melshin turned. His forehead, eyes and cheeks were covered with blood.

"Straight on?" he asked Teliegin.

"Straight across the bridge, then to the left, to the hills."

XXVII

Gloomy and desolate are the Carpathians on a windy autumn evening. Troubled and anxious were the hearts of the fugitives when they reached the crest along the white, rain-washed road. Some three or four pine trees, bare to their topmost branches, were swaying above a ravine. In the mist below a faint murmur rose from a barely visible wood. Lower still, at the very bottom of the ravine water roared and splashed among the stones.

Through the trunks of the pines, far beyond the wooded, desert mountain tops, a long streak of purple sunset glowed among the leaden clouds. A strong wind blew freely on that height; forgotten memories whistled in the ears; the apron of the car flapped to and fro.

The fugitives were silent. Teliegin studied a map and Melshin, his elbows resting on the wheel, stared in the direction of the setting sun. His head was bandaged with a rag.

"What are we to do with the car?" he asked quietly. "There is no more petrol."

"We can't leave it here, by God!" Teliegin replied.

"We can pitch it down the ravine." Melshin jumped to the ground with a groan and stamped up and down to stretch his legs, then he shook Jukov by the shoulders. "Wake up, Captain, we've arrived!"

Without opening his eyes Jukov jumped into the road, stumbled and sat down on the stones. Again he nodded his head. They gave him a dose of brandy. From the car Ivan Ilyitch took out some leather cloaks and a

basket of provisions, which had been intended for the judges' dinner at "The Rotten Hole." They filled their pockets with the provisions, put on the cloaks and taking hold of the wings of the car they pushed it to the edge of the ravine.

"You've served your turn, my dear," Melshin said. "Forward! Together! Again!"

The front wheels were suspended above the ravine. The long, dusty car, covered with leather and mounted with bronze, obedient like a living creature, heeled over and crashed below with the stones and rubble. For a moment it caught on a projecting rock, trembled, and then, amid the thunder of flying stones and broken iron, it crashed to the torrents below.

The fugitives turned into the woods and walked along parallel to the road. It was now quite dark. The pines overhead rustled solemnly with a sound like that of a distant waterfall, sad and eternal.

Teliegin moved to the road from time to time to look at the milestones. They skirted one place, where they supposed there was a militia station, climbing over ravines, striking against fallen trees, stumbling into mountain streams and getting soaked and torn. They walked the whole of the night.

Once, it was almost at dawn, they heard the sound of a car and hid in a ditch, as it passed so close that they could hear the voices of the people inside.

In the morning the fugitives chose a place to rest in a densely wooded ravine by a stream. They half emptied the flask of brandy and Jukov asked to be shaved with a razor which they had found in the car. When they had divested him of his beard and moustache, he was found to have a childish chin and full, big lips, which pouted like the mouth of a jug. Teliegin and Melshin

pointed their fingers at him and laughed for a long time. Jukov was delighted. He bellowed and shook his head. He was a little drunk from the brandy. They covered him up with leaves and bade him go to sleep.

Teliegin and Melshin afterwards spread the map on the grass and each made a small topographical copy for himself. They had made up their minds to separate on the morrow, Melshin and Jukov to go to Roumania and Teliegin to Galicia. The big map was buried in the ground. They collected a pile of leaves and nestled down among them, falling asleep immediately.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. At the top of the ravine, on a high rock, a man stood leaning on his rifle. It was the sentry guarding the bridge. Around him and in the wooded waste at his feet it was still; the silence was broken only by a heavy woodcock flying across the field and striking its wing against a tree and by the distant sound of slowly falling water. After a time the sentry walked away, shouldering his rifle.

It was night when Ivan Ilyitch opened his eyes. Through the still, black branches of the trees, the stars shimmered, big and clear.

He raised himself and looked about him and once more lay down on his back. He recalled the events of yesterday, but the mental strain of the trial and the flight was so great that he tried to banish all thoughts of them.

Overhead, in a small constellation, a star shone with a blue light. The blue ray had left it a thousand years ago, and now entered the eye and heart of Ivan Ilyitch. This star and the Milky Way and the countless constellations were but a grain of sand in the heavenly sea. And in the distance were dark chasms looking like sacks of coal—depths leading to eternity. And the stars and

the black chasms were in Ivan Ilyitch's warm heart that beat among the dry leaves.

It may be that the star dust of a million worlds went to the making of the small atom of a heart that lived by the sheer will to love. As the mysterious, insensible starlight bathed the earth, so the heart sent out its invisible light—the longing for love—to meet it, refusing to believe that it was small and mortal. It was a divine moment.

"Are you asleep, Ivan Ilyitch?" Melshin asked quietly.

"No; I have been awake a long time. We must get up. You wake the Captain. We ought to be making a move."

Within an hour Ivan Ilyitch was walking alone down the white road, in the darkness.

XXVIII

On the tenth day Ivan Ilyitch had reached the lines near the front. He was only able to walk at night then. As soon as it was light he would go into the woods and when he was forced to walk in the valleys he would choose for a night shelter a place as far as possible removed from habitation. He lived on vegetables, which he stole from kitchen gardens.

The night was rainy and cold. Ivan Ilyitch was walking along the road among the hospital wagons, loaded with wounded going west and carts with household goods and crowds of women and old men, who carried babies and bundles and utensils in their arms.

Coming east to meet them were the military baggage-train and the troop units. It was strange to reflect that the years 1914, 1915 had gone and that 1916 was drawing to a close and still the baggage-carts rumbled over the rough road and the population of burnt villages wandered in meek despair. Only now the military horses could scarcely move their legs, the troops looked tattered and shrunken and the crowd of homeless were silent and indifferent. And in the east, whence a strong wind was sweeping the low clouds, fighting was still going on, men fighting men who had ceased to be enemies, unable to exterminate one another.

In the swampy valley, a mob of people and carts moved in the darkness over the bridge across the swelling river. Wheels rumbled, whips cracked, orders were shouted, numerous lanterns swung, their light falling on the dark water, rushing between the stakes.

Gliding along the slope by the road, Ivan Ilyitch reached the bridge.

A military cart went past him. He would not have thought of crossing to the other side earlier in the day. At the bridge-head the horses strained against the shafts, digging their hoofs into the sopping boards, unable to drag out their heavy loads. By the bridge was a man on horseback, in a cloak which flapped in the wind. He carried a lantern and yelled in a hoarse voice. An old man approached him and touched his cap, wanting to ask him something, no doubt. Instead of replying, the horseman struck him in the face with the hilt of his sword and the man rolled over among the wheels. The other end of the bridge was lost in the darkness, but by the numerous moving lanterns thousands of refugees must have been walking there. The baggage-train moved slowly. Ivan Ilyitch was pressed against a cart, in which sat a thin woman, wrapped in a blanket, with hair hanging over her eyes. In one hand she held a bird cage, in the other she held the reins. The stream of carts came to a sudden standstill. The woman turned her head in horror. From the other end of the bridge a sound of voices was heard, and lanterns swung quickly. Something must have happened. A horse screamed wildly, as only an animal can. Some one cried: "Save yourselves!" and a rifle report rent the air. Horses reared, carts shook, women and children howled and screamed.

Intermittent flashes came from the distance to the right, it was the counter firing. The heart beat like a hammer.

They seemed to be firing all over the river. The woman with the bird cage scrambled out of the cart. Her skirt caught on something and she fell, crying in a

deep voice: "Save me!" The bird with the cage rolled down the slope.

Amidst cries and jolting the baggage-train moved on again across the bridge. Ivan Ilyitch saw a large cart heel over at the edge of the bridge and crash through the railings into the river. At that moment he jumped from the wheel on which he had been sitting, dashed over the scattered bundles and catching up a moving cart he threw himself into it on his back. Instantly the scent of baked bread reached his nostrils. He put his hand under the tarpaulin and broke off a chunk from the end of a round loaf. He nearly choked in his eagerness to eat it.

In the confusion which followed the firing, the baggage-train crossed the bridge to the other side of the river. Ivan Ilyitch got out of the cart and wound his way among the refugees and vehicles to the fields, through which he walked parallel to the road. From bits of conversation he had caught in the darkness, he gathered that the firing had come from the enemy, that is, Russian scouts.

The front was no more than ten versts away.

Now and again Ivan Ilyitch stopped to take breath. It was hard walking against the wind and rain. His knees wobbled, his face burned, his eyes were red and swollen. He sat down at last on the edge of a ditch and put his head in his hands. Cold raindrops fell down his neck, his body ached as though crushed by wheels.

Suddenly a muffled sound reached him, which seemed like the opening of the earth in the distance. In a moment a similar sigh broke the night. Ivan Ilyitch raised his head and listened. Between the sighs a muffled murmuring was borne to him, which now lessened, now increased to an angry rumble. The sounds came from

the left, almost from the opposite direction to that in which Ivan Ilyitch was going.

He seated himself on the other side of the ditch. He could now see clearly low-hanging, broken clouds flying over the iron-grey sky. It was the dawn. The east. Russia was over there.

Ivan Ilyitch rose and tightened his belt. He stretched his legs in the mud and set out in an easterly direction, walking through wet stubble, ditches and the partly covered remains of last year's trenches. When it was light at the end of the field he again saw the road full of people and carts. He stopped and looked about him. On one side, beneath a tall half-bare tree stood a white chapel.

The door was open; the roof and ground were strewn with dead leaves.

Ivan Ilyitch resolved to stay there until it was dark. He went in and lay down on the moss-covered floor with his face to the wall. The rumbling of wheels and cracking of whips were borne from the distance. The sounds were strangely pleasant, but were suddenly broken off. Fingers seemed to press his eyelids. In his heavy sleep a living point gradually grew. It tried to turn into the image of a dream, but could not. So great was his exhaustion that Ivan Ilyitch groaned and turned his head, sinking deeper into the soft abysses of sleep. The point appeared again, troubled, as though at something that had happened. His heart was full of tears. Sleep was lighter now and the rumbling of distant wheels heard once more. Ivan Ilyitch sat up and looked around. Through the doorway, dull, heavy clouds could be seen and the sun, setting in the west, cast broad rays beneath their leaden, watery bases. A liquid patch of light shone

on the crumbling chapel wall, lighting up the bent head of a faded wooden figure of the Virgin Mother surrounded by a halo. The Holy Child, wrapped in faded chrism-cloth, lay on her knees and His hand, extended in blessing, was broken off.

Ivan Ilyitch made the sign of the cross quickly and walked out of the chapel. On a stone step at the entrance sat a young, fair-haired woman with a baby on her lap. She wore a white mud-bespattered overcoat. One hand supported her cheek, the other rested on the gaily coloured blanket wrapped around the baby. She raised her head slowly and looked at Ivan Ilyitch—her glance was strangely bright—and her tear-stained face twitched as though with a smile. In a soft voice she said simply in Russian: "The boy is dead." And again she leaned her head on her hand.

Teliegin bent over her and caressed her hair. She sighed and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Come; I will carry him for you," he said kindly. But the woman shook her head.

"Where can I go? You go alone, kind sir, and God be with you."

Ivan Ilyitch regarded her for a moment, then pulled his cap over his eyes and walked away. Just then, from the back of the chapel, two Austrian field gendarmes galloped up. They were big-whiskered, dark men, in soaked, dirty coats. As they passed Ivan Ilyitch they looked at him and reined in their horses. The one in front called in a hoarse voice: "Come here!"

Ivan Ilyitch came up. The gendarme leant from the saddle and looked at him searchingly with piercing eyes, swollen from the wind and lack of sleep. They suddenly kindled merrily.

"A Russian!" he cried, seizing Teliegin by the collar. Ivan Ilyitch made no attempt to get away. He smiled a crooked smile.

Teliegin was locked in a shed some three versts away. It was already night. From the distance came a sound of gun firing. Through the cracks in the wall of wood a dull red glow could be seen in the east. Ivan Ilyitch ate up the remaining piece of bread which he had taken from the cart, then he made the round of the walls to find a place through which he could get out. He stumbled against a bundle of hay, yawned and lay down. He was not able to sleep, though. Four guns began to boom soon after midnight at no great distance away. Flashes of red came through the crevices. Ivan Ilyitch got up and listened. The intervals between the booms of each gun grew less and the walls of the shed shook. Suddenly, quite close, single rifle reports rang out.

The fighting was clearly drawing nearer. Outside, agitated voices could be heard and the throbbing of a motor-car. There was a stampede of many feet. Ivan Ilyitch then realized that they were firing on the shed. He lay down on the floor behind a bundle of straw.

There was a smell of powder smoke in the shed. The firing went on incessantly. The Russians were apparently advancing with great speed. The volume of sound that rent the heart did not last long, however. The bursting of hand grenades was heard, which sounded like a cracking of nuts. Ivan Ilyitch sprang up and groped along the wall. They were not going to kill him, were they? At last came a piercing shriek, a roar and a stampede of feet. The firing ceased. A few grenades exploded. In the long moment's lull iron blows were heard on something

soft. Then came frightened cries: "We surrender, Russians, Russians!"

Ivan Ilyitch tore away a splinter of wood and could see running figures, some covering their heads with their hands. From the right huge masses of cavalry dashed among the crowd. "Stop! stop! we surrender!" the running figures cried. Three men turned towards the shed. After them came a horseman, hatless, with a big Caucasian cowl flying behind him. He was mounted on a huge beast, which snorted and reared heavily. Like a man drunk, the horseman flourished his sword, open-mouthed. With a swish, he lunged out, but the horse made a forward movement and the blade split.

"Let me out!" Teliegin cried in a strange voice, banging on the door. The man reined in the horse.

"Who is that?"

"A prisoner. A Russian officer."

"One moment." The horseman bent down and with the hilt of his sword drew back the bolts. Ivan Ilyitch came out and the man who had opened the door, the officer of the savage division. said with a sarcastic smile: "What a place to meet in, to be sure!"

Ivan Ilyitch looked at him.

"I don't know you."

"I am Sapojkov, Sergei Sergeyevitch." He laughed a hoarse, rasping laugh. "Hang it, it would have been a splendid thing, eh? A pity my sword was broken."

XXIX

For the last hour of the journey to Moscow the train rolled shrieking past deserted country houses. The smoke from the engine mingled with the autumn leaves, with the transparent yellow of the birch, with the purple of the aspen tree, from the neighbourhood of which a smell of mushrooms was wafted. The red branches of the maple, here and there, hung over the very railway. Seen through a bare bush were glass balls on a flower bed; the country cottages had their shutters closed and the paths and the steps were strewn with leaves.

They were now passing an intermediate station, where two soldiers with kit-bags stared open-mouthed at the carriage windows and a forlorn, God-forsaken girl, in a shabby check coat, was tracing a pattern on the wet platform with the end of her umbrella. Here, at the bend, was a wooden hoarding, depicting a large bottle, beneath which was printed "Matchless Riabinovaya Shustova." The woods ended and long lines of bright green cabbages stretched to right and left. At a turnpike stood a hay cart and women and peasants in short coats were tugging a grey, obstinate horse by the bridle. And in the distance, beneath the long clouds, sharp-pointed spires were visible and high above the town were the five shining balls of St. Savior's.

Teliegin was lounging by the carriage window, breathing in the laden October air, the scent of leaves, the smell of decaying mushrooms, the smoke of burning straw and the fragrance of the earth on a frosty dawn.

Behind him lay the hard road of two years of suffering, and he felt that the end of it lay in this wonderful hour of expectancy. Ivan Ilyitch reckoned that sharp on the stroke of three he would press the bell of the only door (he imagined it to be of light oak, with two windows over the top). Had he been dead, he would have dragged himself to that door.

The fields of vegetables ended. They were flying by the mud-bespattered houses of a suburb, past the roughly paved streets with the rumbling carts, past the fences and gardens of old lime trees, which stretched their branches to the middle of the road, past the medley of sign boards and the passers-by, who were bent on their own silly business, and paid no heed to the rolling train, nor to Ivan Ilyitch at the carriage window. Below, a toylike tramcar was running up the street, and then there was a little church, hemmed in by houses. Ivan Ilyitch crossed himself quickly. The wheels rattled over a siding. At last, after two long years of absence, he was gliding by the windows of the asphalt platform of the Moscow railway station. Well-kempt and indifferent old men in clean white aprons dashed into the carriages. Ivan Ilyitch put his head far out of the window. How foolish of him! He had not informed them of his arrival.

With a cheap-looking suit-case, purchased in Kiev, Ivan Ilyitch walked out of the station and could not keep himself from laughing aloud. In the square, some fifty paces away, stood a long line of izvozchiks. They gesticulated with their long sleeves, crying:

"I can take you! I can take you! I can take you!"

"What do you want with a piebald beast, sir, when here is a fine black one?"

"I'll take you, sir! I'll take you!"

"Where are you going to, you damned fool? Whoa, back!"

"Mine's a fast horse, sir!"

Reined back, the horses stamped and snorted. The square was filled with cries. In one more moment it seemed the whole line of izvozchiks would dash into the railway station.

Ivan Ilyitch mounted a high trap with a high seat, driven by a smart driver, an insolent peasant with a handsome face, who asked the address with kindly indulgence and for greater "swank" started off at a gallop, sitting sideways with the reins loose in his left hand. The tires jolted over the cobblestones.

"Just back from the war, sir?"

"I was a prisoner and escaped."

"Really? How are things with them? Some say they've got nothing to eat. Mind, Granny! . . . You're a national hero. . . . Many of our men run away because there is nothing to eat there. . . . Look out, carter! . . . Ah, the boor! He's filled himself with home-made vodka. . . . Have you heard of Ivan Trifonitch?"

"Which one?"

"The one from Rasgulia, who deals in carbolic or sulphur. . . . He came to me complaining yesterday. . . . What a business, to be sure! He's made such a pile on contracting, he doesn't know what to do with his money and his wife ran away with a little Pole three days ago. She didn't run far, either. Only to the Petersburg Park, to Jan. The next day the izvozchiks had got the story all over the town and Ivan Trifonitch can't so much as show himself in the street, for everyone laughs at him. . . . That's what you get when you rob and get rich. . . ."

"Do go faster, my dear fellow," Ivan Ilyitch urged,

though the fine cob was tearing like the wind through the streets as it was, tugging viciously at the reins with his mouth.

"Here we are, sir. The second door. Whoa Vasia!"

In trepidation Ivan Ilyitch looked up at the six windows of a detached house, covered peacefully by lace curtains. He jumped out at the door. It was an old carved door, with a lion's head for the handle. There was an ordinary bell, not an electric one. For some seconds, Ivan Ilyitch was unable to raise his hand to it. His heart beat violently.

"Of course, I'm all in the dark. They mayn't be at home, or perhaps they won't see me," he thought, as he pulled the brass handle.

A bell rang within. "I'm sure no one is at home." Immediately the quick footsteps of a woman were heard. Ivan Ilyitch looked about in perplexity. The black-bearded, cheery face of the smart driver winked at him. A chain clanged; the door opened and the pock-marked face of a maid appeared.

"Does Daria Dmitrievna Bulavina live here?" Teliegin asked with a cough.

"She is at home. Come in, sir," the pock-marked girl said in a kindly sing-song. "The mistress and the young lady are both at home."

As in a dream Ivan Ilyitch entered the hall, where by a glass wall stood a striped ottoman, and there was a smell of coats. The maid opened another door to the right, which was covered with black oilcloth. In the small, dimly lighted passage hung a woman's coat and in front of a looking-glass lay a pair of gloves, a kerchief with a red cross on it and a down shawl. A familiar, faint scent of amazing perfumes came from those innocent things.

Without asking the visitor's name, the maid went in to announce him. With his fingers, Ivan Ilyitch touched the down shawl. Coming from that bloody mess he felt that he had no connection with this pure, refined life. "Some one to see you, miss," he heard the maid's voice from the depths of the house. Ivan Ilyitch shut his eyes. A divine thunder-clap would burst instantly. He trembled from head to foot as he heard a clear voice ask:

"To see me? Who is it?"

Steps were heard walking through the rooms. They seemed to come from the depths of two years of waiting. Coming from the light of the windows, Dasha appeared in the doorway. There was a golden light on her fair hair. She looked taller and thinner. She was dressed in a knitted blouse and a blue skirt.

"Have you come to see me?"

Dasha gasped. Her face twitched, her brows went up, her mouth opened. She threw her arms impetuously round Ivan Ilyitch's neck and kissed him on the lips. Then she stepped back and touched her eyes with her fingers.

"Come in here, Ivan Ilyitch." Dasha led the way into the drawing-room and sank into a chair. She covered her face with her hands and bending to her knees, she wept.

"How stupid of me. It will soon pass," she said, wiping her eyes energetically. Ivan Ilyitch stood before her, his cap pressed against his chest. Dasha suddenly leaned her arms on the arms of the chair and raised her head.

"Did you escape, Ivan Ilyitch?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens! Well?"

"Well . . . and here I am."

He sat down in a chair opposite her, put his cap on a table and stared at his feet.

"How did you manage it?" Dasha stammered.

"It was very ordinary, on the whole."

"Was there danger?"

"There was. That is, nothing unusual."

Both were gradually caught in a kind of spider's web. Dasha, too, dropped her eyes.

"How long have you been in Moscow?"

"I have just come from the station."

"I will have some coffee made." . . .

"Please don't trouble. I am just going to my hotel."

"Will you come in the evening?" Dasha asked in a scarcely audible voice.

Ivan Ilyitch nodded with compressed lips. He wanted air. He rose to go.

"Then I shall come back in the evening."

Dasha extended her hand. He took her soft, firm hand and the contact made him feel hot. The blood rushed to his face. He pressed her finger and turned to the hall, but stopped in the doorway. Dasha stood with her back to the light, looking askance at him, in a strange, unfriendly way.

"May I come at seven, Daria Dmitrievna?"

She nodded. Ivan Ilyitch rushed out of doors.

"Drive to a good hotel," he said to the driver; "the best in the place."

Leaning back in the seat of the trap, his hands drawn up in the sleeves of his coat, Ivan Ilyitch smiled broadly to himself. Blue shadows of people and trees and carriages flew past his eyes. A cold wind, which smelt of a Russian town, beat against his face. Ivan Ilyitch took his nose in the palm of his hand, which still burned with

Dasha's touch, and laughed aloud. "Sheer witchery!"

Dasha was at that moment standing by the drawing-room window with a ringing sound in her head. She could not collect her thoughts, could not make out what had happened. She shut her eyes with a groan and ran into her sister's room.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna was sitting by the window sewing and thinking. On hearing Dasha enter she asked, without raising her head:

"Who was your visitor, Dasha?"

"He."

Katia looked up, her face twitched.

"Who?"

"He. . . . Can't you understand? He. . . . Ivan Ilyitch." . . .

Katia let fall her work and clapped her hands slowly.

"Only think, Katia; I am not even glad. I am only frightened," Dasha said in a hushed voice.

XXX

When it began to get dark Dasha trembled at every sound. She kept rushing into the drawing-room and listening. Now and again she tried to read a book, a supplement of "The Neva," beginning always at the same page. "Marousia liked chocolates, which her husband would bring her from Krapt." . . . She threw the book down and went to the window. Two windows in a house opposite were lighted up in the frosty twilight. It was the house where Charodeyeva, the actress, lived. A maid in a cap could be seen quietly laying the table. Charodeyeva, as thin as a skeleton, came in with a velvet coat thrown round her shoulders. She sat down by the table and yawned, looking as if she had been asleep on the couch. She served herself some soup and suddenly grew lost in thought, staring at a little vase containing a withered rose. "Marousia liked chocolates . . ." Dasha said under her breath. The bell rang. The blood rushed from Dasha's heart. It was only the evening paper, however. "He is not coming," Dasha thought, and went into the dining-room, where a single lamp burned over the white tablecloth and a clock ticked. Dasha sat down by the table. "So at every second life goes by. A time will come when there will be only a few seconds left. One, two, three." . . .

There was another ring at the front door. Dasha choked and ran into the hall. It was a porter from the hospital with a packet of papers. Dasha at last went into her own room and lay down on the couch.

"Ivan Ilyitch won't come and he is perfectly right. I waited two years and when I got him I hadn't a word to say. There was emptiness in place of love." . . .

Dasha pulled a pocket-handkerchief from beneath the cushion and applied it to her eyes. She knew that that was how it would all end. In the two years she had forgotten Ivan Ilyitch. She had loved some one of her own imagination and he had come back strange and new, with not a trace in his face to engage her former feelings.

"Terrible, terrible!" Dasha thought. She would have to pretend to love him, just the same; no one would excuse her perfidy.

Dasha sat up on the couch and dangled her legs. . . . "He must never know. And as for you, don't you dare think of it. Love him. Even if you can't, you must love him all the same."

She bit the corner of her handkerchief, thinking: "I must have no will of my own now; I am all his, thoughts and feelings and body. He can do as he likes with me."

Suddenly she grew calm. "I will submit and he must love me as I am." Dasha sighed. She got up from the couch and went over to the looking-glass, where she tidied her hair and powdered her face to remove the traces of tears. She leant her elbow on the dressing-table and looked at herself in the glass. A pretty girl with fair hair, a sad, childish face with slightly swollen lips stared at her from the oval frame. The nose was small, the eyes large and clear. Too clear, somehow.

As she looked, Dasha moved nearer to the glass. "Nothing might have happened to look at you. Everything might be serene and as it should be. A veritable angel. Arms, bare neck, charms hidden and exposed. . . . You couldn't have done anything wrong." . . . Dasha

smiled; the glass became covered with steam. "You are going through the supreme moment. Good-bye. You will be taken out into fresh water. Your eyes will be darker." . . .

Dasha listened. A hot stream seemed to flow through her body. She was both hot and calm. She did not notice the door open, nor the pock-marked Liza come in.

"A visitor for you, miss."

Dasha gave a deep sigh. She rose as lightly as though her feet had not touched the floor and went into the dining-room. Katia was the first to see Dasha, whom she greeted with a smile. Ivan Ilyitch jumped up. He blinked as from a strong light and held himself erect. He was dressed in a new woollen shirt, with a new shoulder-strap on one shoulder. His hair was cut and his face shaven. It was only now that one could see how tall and broad-shouldered he had become. Of course, he was another man. The gaze of his blue eyes was steady, the corners of his straight-cut mouth had two wrinkles, two tiny points. Dasha's heart beat. She knew that it meant contact with death and horror and suffering. His hand was strong and cold as ice.

"Sit down, Ivan Ilyitch," she said, going up to the table. "Tell us about yourself."

She sat down on a chair beside him. Teliegin put his hands on the tablecloth and clenched them. He began to tell them about his captivity and flight. Dasha, who sat close to him, watched his face, open-mouthed.

It seemed to Ivan Ilyitch that his voice came from afar. The words came of themselves. He was bewildered and agitated by the fact that beside him, her dress touching his knees, sat this indescribable girl, who was both dear and strange to him, quite incomprehensible,

who smelt of forest glades and flowers and of something warm that made the head go round.

The whole evening Ivan Ilyitch related his experiences.

Dasha questioned and interrupted him, clapped her hands and appealed to her sister:

"Only think, Katia, he was condemned to be shot! Just imagine it!"

When Teliegin came to the fight for the car, the moment that divided them from death, describing how the car moved at last and the wind beat against their faces and there was liberty and life, Dasha turned pale and seized his hand.

"We are not going to let you go again!"

Teliegin laughed.

"There won't be any help for it when I am called up again. My only hope is to be listed on a munition works."

He gently pressed her hand. Dasha looked into his eyes intently; her cheeks flushed a slight red; she let go his hand.

"Won't you smoke? I will bring you some matches."

She went out quickly and returned with a box of matches. She stood before Ivan Ilyitch, striking one match after another and all broke. What matches Liza bought, indeed! At last one struck and Dasha brought the flame to the end of Ivan Ilyitch's cigarette. The light shone on the end of her delicate chin. Teliegin lighted his cigarette with his eyes shut. He did not know that so much pleasure could be experienced in the lighting of a cigarette.

Katia watched the two of them. She felt immeasurably sad. She could hardly keep back the tears. Her mind was full of that never-to-be-forgotten dear youth, Rosh-

chin. He, too, used to sit with them at the table and she, too, used to bring him matches and strike a light. But she never broke a single one.

Teliegin went away at midnight. Dasha embraced and kissed her sister and shut herself in her own room. As she lay on the bed with her arms thrown above her head, she reflected that at last she had broken through her spiritual fog. Everything about her was desolate and empty and strange, but, at any rate, there was the blue sky, there was happiness.

XXXI

On the fifth day after his arrival, Ivan Ilyitch received a government intimation from Petrograd, commanding him to present himself at the Ibukhovsky works and put himself at the disposal of the chief engineer.

The joy over this, the remainder of the day spent with Dasha busily in the town, the hasty farewell at the Nicholas Station, the second class well heated compartment, the packet he found in his pocket, tied with a ribbon and containing two apples, chocolates and some cakes, were all like a dream. Ivan Ilyitch unfastened his woollen shirt, stretched out his legs, and unable to banish a stupid smile from his lips, he stared at his neighbour opposite, an old man in spectacles.

"Are you from Moscow?" the old man asked.

"Yes." God! What a sweet word it was! Moscow! . . . The streets bathed in sunshine, the dry leaves beneath the feet, Dasha, light and slender stepping over them, her clear, intelligent voice (he could not recall her words), the constant smell of apples when he bent over her or kissed her hand.

"Sodom! A veritable Sodom!" the old man said. "I spent three days in the Kokorev Inn and I did see things, I tell you." . . . He parted his feet, in boots and high galoshes, and spat on the floor. "If you go out in the street there are people, people, crowding everywhere. What for? They tear about the shops, drive about furiously, and are always in a hurry. What is the reason of it all? And at night there is a twisting and whirling of illumi-

nated signs. What a noise and bustle! People crowding in thousands. . . . They are quite mad. It seems to me nothing but a devilish, shameless, stupid hurry-scurry. Now you are a young man; you've been wounded at the war; I can see that at a glance; I should like you to tell an old fellow like me, is it really for this damned hurly-burly that the men are shedding their blood at the front? Where's the country? Where religion? Where the Tsar? Tell me. Now I'm going to Petersburg to buy some sewing cotton, be damned to it. . . . That we should have come to this! It will not be sewing cotton that I shall bring back to Tumen. It's a message that I'll bring. I shall tell them we have all gone to the devil. . . . Mark my words, young man. We shall pay for this rushing past thirty times when a man has to go quietly once." The old man leant on his knees, got up and pulled down the window blind to keep out the lines of flying sparks from the engine. "We have forgotten God and God has forgotten us. . . . A reckoning will come, I tell you, a cruel reckoning." . . .

"Do you mean the Germans will beat us?" Ivan Ilyitch asked.

"Who knows? Whomever the Lord sends to chastise us, from him shall we receive our punishment. . . . Now look here, supposing the young fellows in my shop begin to misbehave themselves, I may bear it for a time, but then I'll give this one a knock on the head, another a blow in the neck, a third a punch in the jaw. Russia, however, is not a shop. God is merciful, but when people have defiled the way to Him, mustn't that way be cleared? That is my meaning. It is not merely a question, young man, of abstaining from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, it's a question of something more seri-

ous. God has gone from the world; there is nothing more terrible than that." . . .

The old man folded his hands over his stomach and closed his eyes. His spectacles sparkled severely as he bobbed up and down in his corner on the grey bunk. Ivan Ilyitch left the carriage and stood by the corridor window with his face almost touching the glass. The fresh, keen air blew in through a crack. Without, in the darkness, lines of fire flew and interlaced and dropped to the ground. A cloud of smoke was borne past now and again. The carriage wheels clanked loudly, the engine gave a prolonged shriek and turning, the fire from its furnace lighted up the dark fir cones, making them stand out and disappear in the darkness. A signal dropped; the carriages gave a slight jerk; a green lantern flashed out and once more sheets of fire rained past the windows.

As he watched them Ivan Ilyitch, with a sudden, overwhelming joy, realized the force of what had happened in the past five days. Had he been able to tell some one what he felt, he would have been counted a madman. There was nothing strange or mad in it for him, however; everything was unusually clear.

In the darkness of the night, he felt, there moved and suffered and died millions upon millions of people. And all the millions imagined themselves to be living beings. But they lived only conditionally, and everything that took place on earth was merely conditional, fanciful almost. It seemed to him fanciful to such a degree that were he to make a single effort, the whole world would be changed and assume a different aspect. And amidst the fantasy there beat a living heart. His own heart, belonging to the bent figure at the window. It had left the world of shadows and was flying over the dark world

in a rain of fire. His heart beat with divine joy and living blood—the sap of love flowed through it.

This strange feeling of love for himself lasted for some seconds. He went back to his carriage, climbed on to the upper bunk and as he undressed he looked at his big hands, reflecting for the first time in his life that they were beautiful. He put them behind his head and shut his eyes and instantly he saw Dasha. She was gazing into his eyes in loving agitation. (It was the same day, in the dining-room. Dasha was turning over some cakes. Ivan Ilyitch walked round the table and kissed her warm shoulder. She turned quickly. "Dasha, will you be my wife?" he asked. She merely looked at him without replying.)

Lying on the bunk he could see Dasha's face now and was unable to feast enough on the vision. For the first time he felt a joyous exultation in the thought that Dasha loved him and that he had big and beautiful hands. His heart beat violently.

When he arrived in Petersburg Ivan Ilyitch immediately presented himself at the Obukhovsky works and was listed on night duty in one of the workshops.

A great many things had changed at the works in the last three years. There were three times as many workers, some of them quite young fellows; some had been brought from the Urals and some had been taken from the operating army. Not a trace remained of the former half-starved, half-drunken workman, who was bitter and timid. The men earned good wages, read newspapers, abused the war, the Tsar, the Tsarina, Rasputin and the

generals. They were all enraged and believed in a revolution after the war.

They were particularly enraged that the bread in the town bakeries was mixed with chaff and that for days there would be no meat in the market, and that when there was any it would be bad. Potatoes, too, were rotten, sugar was dirty. and to add to everything food was very dear and shopkeepers were profiteering. As much as fifty roubles would be charged for a box of chocolates and a hundred for a bottle of champagne. And nothing would they hear of making peace with the Germans.

Ivan Ilyitch was allowed three days to arrange his personal affairs and spent the time rushing about the town to look for a flat. He had no clear notion as to why he wanted a flat, but when he had stood by the carriage window he had thought it necessary to take a nice flat having white rooms and blue curtains and clean windows showing a view of the islands.

He went over dozens of houses, but found nothing to please him. In one there was a wall opposite, in another the furniture was too rough or depressing. On the last day, however, he succeeded in finding the very thing he had pictured to himself in the railway carriage. It was a flat of five tiny white rooms with clean windows facing west. It was situated at the end of Kamen Island and was very inconvenient and expensive, but he took it immediately and wrote to inform Dasha about it.

On the fourth night he went on duty at the works. In the yard, black with coal-dust, were tall lamp-posts with lighted lamps. The smoke from the brick chimneys was beaten by the damp wind to the ground; yellow, stifling fumes filled the air. Through the big, semi-circular, dirty windows of the workshops numberless whirling

transmission straps could be seen turning the iron cheeks of the lathes and boring mills, planing and turning steel and bronze. The vertical discs of stamping machines came down. Cranes flew high in the darkness. The furnaces blazed with a red and white light. Vibrating the ground with its rapid strokes was a huge steam hammer. From the low smelting chimneys, columns of flame rose in the dark-grey sky. The figures of men moved leisurely through the deafening noise and the gleam of iron-bound demons. . . .

Ivan Ilyitch entered the workshop where they stamped shrapnel shells. Strukov, an engineer and old acquaintance, conducted him through the shop, explaining certain characteristics of the work with which Teliegin was not acquainted. He afterwards took him into a little office, partitioned off from the shop, and showed him the books and reports. He then handed him the keys and putting on his overcoat, said: "Twenty-three per cent of the goods turned out are duds. Try and keep to the figure."

By the way he talked and the manner in which he had given over the workshop, Teliegin gathered how indifferent Strukov was to the work, and Strukov, as he had known him of old, was an excellent engineer and a great enthusiast. He was troubled and asked: "Isn't it possible to reduce the percentage of duds?"

Strukov yawned and shook his head. He pulled his cap low over his unkempt head and went back to the lathes with Ivan Ilyitch.

"Drop that, my dear fellow. What is the difference? Twenty-three per cent less men will be mown down. Besides, you can't alter anything. The lathes are completely worn out. Let them go to the devil!"

He stopped by a press. A short-legged old workman

in a leather apron put a red-hot pig of ore under the stamp; the frame came down, the rod entered the soft red steel, a hot flame shot up, the frame rose and a three-inch shrapnel shell fell to the ground. The old man immediately brought up another pig of ore. Another man, a tall young fellow with a curled black moustache, was busy by the furnace. Strukov turned to the old man.

"Well, Rublev, are all the shells dud?"

The old man smiled and with the slits of eyes gave a cunning, furtive look at Teliegin.

"Of course, they're dud. See how the thing works." He put his hand on the post, green with grease, on which the frame of the press glided. "You can see the damned thing shake. It ought to have been chucked out long ago."

The young fellow at the furnace, Ivan Rublev's son, Vaska, gave a short laugh.

"A lot of things ought to be chucked out of here. The machine's grown rusty."

"Easier, Vaska," Strukov said cheerfully.

"Easier! That's just it!" Vaska shook his curly head and his broad, handsome face with the black moustache and fierce eyes smiled sarcastically in a self-assured kind of way.

"The two best hands in the shop," Strukov said softly to Ivan Ilyitch as they walked away. "Good-bye. I am going to 'The Red Bells' tonight. Ever been there? An excellent cabaret and they give you good drink. I must take you there some time."

Ivan Ilyitch began to study the Rublevs, both father and son. During that first conversation he was struck by the similarity of word and smile and glance that Strukov

had exchanged with them. All three seemed to be trying to discover whether he, Teliegin, was "one of us" or an enemy. By the ease with which Rublev talked to him, he came to understand that he had been put down as "one of us."

The term had no relation to Ivan Ilyitch's political views, which were exceedingly vague, nor to his past work in the place, but rather to a comfortable feeling of happiness, of which every one was conscious. The source of a great, attainable happiness was contained in Ivan Ilyitch and for this reason he was held to be "one of us" by every one who came in contact with him.

When on duty one night Ivan Ilyitch went up to the Rublevs and listened to the father and son arguing. They made occasional appeals to him.

Vaska Rublev was a socialist, well read and embittered. He talked only of class war, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and expressed himself in a smart, bookish way. Ivan Rublev was an Old Believer, cunning, religious, but on the whole, not a God-fearing man.

"At our place, in the Perm forests," he said, "in the books at the hermitages everything is set down, the present war and how we shall be ruined afterwards. The whole of our land will be ruined and the number of people who will be left, and those will be few. . . . And how a man as strong as a beast will come out of a hermitage and will rule the land according to the terrible word of God."

"A mystic," Vaska said with a wink.

"There's a word for you, you rascal! Calls himself a socialist. What sort of a socialist are you, eh? You are a turner by trade; that is what you are, you dog. I was just like him. He must be tearing about with his cap

over his ear, his shirt torn, his eyes bulging out and be singing, 'Arise to battle.' . . . Against whom? What for? You silly ass!"

"Hear how this old man talks?" Vaska said, pointing with his thumb at his father. "He's a dangerous anarchist. He hasn't a notion of what socialism is, yet always abuses me for the way I talk."

"No, my friends," said Rublev, interrupting him as he seized a pig of ore and, executing a circle with it, placed it adroitly by the stamping rod, "you read books, but not the right books. Vaska has learned a single word by heart and that is, freedom. He must have freedom. . . . You try and take it. It is like trying to hold smoke in your hand! There is no humility left. They don't understand that they must be poor in spirit according to the times."

"What a muddle-head you are, Father!" Vaska said with annoyance. "Not long ago he declared himself a revolutionary."

"And so I did. What is that to you? If anything were to happen, my dear fellow, I'd be the first to seize a pitchfork. Why should I hold on to the Tsar? I am a peasant. How much land have I ploughed in the past thirty years? I can't eat freedom with my porridge. I want land and not those damned nuts of yours to crack!" He kicked his boot against a heap of shrapnel shells on the floor. "Revolutionary! Of course, I'm a revolutionary! Don't I prize my soul's salvation?"

Vaska spat in disgust. Ivan Ilyitch laughed. He got up and stretched himself. The night was drawing to a close.

Teliegin wrote to Dasha every day, but she did not reply so often. Her letters were strange and icy and Ivan

Ilyitch felt slightly chilled when he read them. He would sit down by the window with Dasha's sheet of note-paper written in a sloping hand and read it again and again. Then he would gaze at the grey, purple woods on the islands and at the clouded sky, as muddy as the water in the canal. He leant his chin on the window-sill and stared out, reflecting that it was just as well perhaps that Dasha's letters were not warm as he had foolishly hoped them to be and that Dasha wrote them honestly and sincerely. Her heart was true, calm and stern like the Great Festival before the forgiveness of sin.

"My dear Friend," she wrote, "why have you taken a flat of five rooms? Think of the expense you are incurring! It is bad enough if you live alone. Five rooms! And then the service—you must keep two women and in these days, too! One should be content to creep into a hole and sit there with bated breath. . . . In Moscow the autumn is cold and rainy; there is no light. . . . We must wait for the spring. . . ."

Just as on the day of his departure, when he had asked her to be his wife and she had answered merely by a glance, so now in her letter she never referred directly to their marriage nor to their future life together. He must wait until the spring.

This waiting for the spring in vague and desperate hope of some miracle happening was common to every one. Life had stopped, people had burrowed into the winter to lick their paws. Outwardly it seemed that there was no more vitality to bear this new waiting for a bloody spring. On one occasion, Dasha wrote:

"I had not meant to speak nor to write of Bezsonov's death, but yesterday I again heard the details of his terrible end. Not long before he left for the front, I met

him in the Tversky Boulevard. He was pitiful then. Had I not repulsed him he would not have died perhaps. But I did repulse him; I could not do otherwise. I should do the same again if the past were repeated. His death lies at my door; I accept that. You must understand it. You are right when you say that man cannot live for himself alone. . . ."

Teliegin spent half the day answering the letter. "How can you imagine that I do not accept everything that concerns you?" . . . He wrote slowly, trying hard to keep all the letters straight. "I sometimes ask myself what I would do if you were to fall in love with another man; that is, if the worst thing of all were to happen. I should accept that, too . . . I would not resign myself, oh, no; my heart would be dark within me. . . . But my love for you does not consist only in pleasure. You sometimes feel that you want to die because you love too deeply. That is how Bézsonov must have felt when he went to the front. . . . Let his name be sacred. . . . And you must feel that you are absolutely free, Dasha. . . . I ask nothing of you, not even love. . . . I have come to realize this lately. . . . I really want to be humble in spirit. . . . Oh, God, what a hard time it is that we have to love in!"

Two days later Ivan Ilyitch returned at daybreak from the works, had a bath and went to bed, but he was awakened by a telegram:

"All is well. I love you horribly. Your Dasha."

One Sunday evening, Strukov, the engineer, called for Ivan Ilyitch and took him to "The Red Bells."

THE ROAD TO CALVARY

It was a cabaret in a basement and smelt of tobacco and alcohol and the sweat of human beings. The arched ceiling and the walls were decorated with brightly coloured birds, naked women, unnatural in hue and form, infants with distorted faces and many significant scrolls.

The place was filled with noise and smoke. On a platform sat a wrinkled, painted little man in an army shirt, his hands wandering about the keys of a pianoforte. The tables were packed. A group of officers sat drinking cocktails and staring uneasily at the women passing by. Advocates, interested in art, argued loudly. The queen of the place, a black-haired beauty with puffed eyes, was laughing at the top of her voice. At a corner of a table sat Antoshka Arnoldov, twirling a tuft of hair while writing his correspondence from the front. On a raised place, drunk and with hanging head, slumbered the progenitor of futurism, a veterinary surgeon with hollow, consumptive cheeks. Three young poets sitting in a corner yelled out, "Sing something indecent, Kostia!" The painted old man at the piano, without turning round, tried to sing something in an unsteady voice, but no one heard him. The proprietor, an ex-actor, long-haired and harrowed, appeared at a side door now and again, stared at his guests with wild eyes and disappeared. At dawn, three days back, his wife had run away from the place with a young composer straight to the Finnish railway station. He had not slept for three days and had been drinking heavily.

Strukov, somewhat intoxicated with the cocktail he was having, said to Ivan Ilyitch: "No wonder I like this place. It would be hard to find a rottener hole anywhere. . . . It does you good to look at it. Look at that creature sitting by herself in the corner! She's so

thin she can hardly move. The last degree of hysteria. . . . Yet she has a great success among women. . . . And that man over there with the horselike jaw, that's the famous poet, Semesvetov. He knocked out his front teeth to avoid going to the war and writes his verses. . . . 'The war will not end till Russian bayonets are wiped on the silk drawers of Vienna prostitutes.' That's a published one, and there are unpublished ones, too. 'Chew with iron jaw, burst human flesh, bourgeois! Our proletarian bayonet will slit your fat belly.'"

Strukov laughed loudly and emptied the cocktail down his throat. Without wiping his lips, shaded by a Tartar moustache, he kept on telling Ivan Ilyitch the names of the different guests. He pointed out a sleepy, unhealthy-looking man with a wild face.

"There is the very core of the contagion, the very cancer"; he spoke the words with pleasure; "from that spot the decay spreads over Mother Russia. I know you are a patriot, Ivan Ilyitch, a nationalist, an intellectual. . . . How would it be to splash and spatter the blood on this putrefaction? Ha, ha. . . . They'd chase over the earth and bite like mad things. . . . But you wait, the time will come when they will lick the blood; they will come to life again, these swine, these death-heads; they will be conscious of their power, they will believe in their right. . . . And they'll turn everything upside down like mad things. . . . Our Mother Russia, the accursed, will burst and the decay will flow throughout the world. . . . Curse you!"

Strukov was very drunk indeed. His dry eyes glistened merrily and his oaths were pronounced with a gentle smile. Teliegin frowned. His head went round from the medley and the noise of Strukov's incomprehensible outburst.

At first several people and then every one in the room turned their gaze to the entrance door. The veterinary surgeon's yellow eyes bulged; the wild face of the proprietor popped out of the wall; the half-dead woman sitting at the side raised her heavy eyelids and her eyes grew suddenly bright; with unexpected vivacity, she jumped from her chair and stared in the direction of the door. . . . A glass fell.

At the door stood an oldish man of middle height, with shoulders thrust slightly forward and hands in his pockets. His narrow face with the long beard was smiling cheerfully with the two deep habitual wrinkles, and standing out of the whole face were two intelligent, piercing eyes, which shone with a grey light. Thus a minute passed. From out the darkness of the doorway another face approached his; it was the face of a civil-servant, who with a crooked, anxious smile whispered something in his ear. The man unwillingly wrinkled his large nose and said: "There you go again with your foolishness! I'm sick of you!" And looking round at the guests, still more cheerfully, he shook his head and said in a big voice, "Well, good-bye, my jolly friends. . . ."

He went out and the door banged behind him. The whole room began to hum like a beehive. Strukov dug his nails into Ivan Ilyitch. "Did you see? Did you see?" he asked, gasping. "That was Rasputin!"

XXXII

It was four o'clock in the morning and Ivan Ilyitch was walking home from the works. It was a frosty, December night. He could not find an izvozchik; they were hard to find at that time even in the centre of the town. Teliegin walked briskly in the middle of the deserted street, breathing steam into his raised collar. In the light of the few lamps, falling frost needles could be seen in the air. The snow crunched loudly beneath the feet. Red reflections danced on the flat, yellow façade of a house. Teliegin turned the corner and saw the flame of a fire in a pail, around which were chilled figures enveloped in steam. Higher up the pavement was a long, motionless line. About a hundred people—women, old men and boys—were standing in a queue at a provision shop. At the side was a night-porter stamping his feet and banging his arms to keep warm.

Ivan Ilyitch walked the length of the queue and looked at the huddled figures, wrapped in shawls and pressed against the wall.

"Three shops were looted yesterday on the Viborsky," a voice said.

"What else can you do?"

"I asked for half a pound of kerosene yesterday," another voice said, "and they told me they hadn't got any and there was the Dmitrievs' cook buying five pounds before my eyes at a free price."

"What did she pay?"

"Two and a half roubles a pound, my girl."

"For kerosene?"

"We'll remember it against the shopkeeper when the time comes."

"At Okhta, my sister says, they caught a shopkeeper at a trick like that and shoved his head into a pickle-barrel. He begged to be let off, but he was drowned."

"Serves him right. They deserve worse."

"Meanwhile we've got to freeze."

"While he's drinking his tea."

"Who's drinking tea?" a hoarse voice asked.

"They're all swilling it. My mistress, a general's wife, gets up at twelve o'clock and keeps on swilling tea till you think she'll burst, the image."

"And you can stand here and freeze and get consumption."

"You're right. I've got a cough already."

"My mistress is a cocotte. When I get back from market the place is full of men, all in their pants and drunk. Immediately they ask you for an omelette, or black bread or vodka, anything that's coarse."

"It's English money they drink on," a voice said.

"Now, really!"

"Everything is sold, believe me. You stand here and don't know anything, but you've been sold in bondage for fifty years to come. The army, too, is sold. This is what we've come to, my God!"

"What is the use of invoking God? You must demand to be told why you are freezing here while they are in the feather-beds. Are there more of you or of them? Go, pull them out of their feather-beds, lie down in their places and let them come and stand in the queue!"

When these words had been spoken by the same masculine, assured voice, a silence ensued.

"Porter! I say, porter!" some one called with chattering teeth.

"What's happened?"

"Will there be salt today?"

"Probably not."

"Then why am I standing here catching my death of cold?"

"Be damned to them!"

"This is the fifth day that we've had no salt!"

"They drink the blood of the people, the swine!"

"Stop it now, you women. You'll catch a cold in the throat if you talk so much," the porter said in a thick voice.

Teliegin had gone past the queue. The angry voices were still.

Again the straight streets were empty, lost in the leaden, frosty mist.

Ivan Ilyitch reached the embankment and walked on the bridge. The wind blew the tails of his coat aside. He recollected that he had to find an izvozchik, but soon forgot it again. Far on the other bank, a line of shadowy lights twinkled. A line of dim lights on the footpath stretched across the ice. A cold wind blew over the waste of the Neva; the snow crunched, the tramway cables and the cast-iron railings of the bridge vibrated plaintively.

Ivan Ilyitch stopped and looked at the gloomy darkness, thinking, as he often thought now, of one and the same thing, of the moment when, in the railway-carriage, happiness and the consciousness of himself had come to him like a fire from within.

His sensation of happiness was like a light in the darkness. Around him all was troubled and confused and hostile to his happiness. An effort had to be made every time he said to himself, "I live, I am happy, my life will be bright and beautiful."

At the window that night, amidst the sparks of the flying train, it had been easy to say that, but it needed an effort now to detach himself from the half starved figures in the queue, from the howling despair of the December wind, from the touch of the ruin that threatened.

Ivan Ilyitch was convinced that his love for Dasha, her charm, the glad consciousness of himself he had experienced at the carriage-window, was the highest good. There was nothing greater than that in life. However, to detach one of the good things in life from life as a whole was treachery. He could not say to himself: "Let other people be murdered, let them perish of cold and hunger, but Dasha and I will be happy. Let only the two of us remain on earth and we shall still be happy." Such were corrupt and evil thoughts.

In an early letter, Ivan Ilyitch had written to Dasha: "What a hard time it is we have to love in." It was hard because the old, comfortable, rather narrow, but amazing temple of life was shaken; it crumbled at the blows dealt by the war; its columns swayed; its wide dome was broken, the old stones were scattered and amidst the dust of the ruins, two beings, Ivan Ilyitch and Dasha, in the madness of their love, desired to be happy despite everything.

He looked at the gloomy darkness of the night, at the twinkling lights; he heard the wind howl desperately and thought: "It is not wrong; the desire for happiness is higher than everything. I am made in the image and likeness of God. I don't want the image to be destroyed, I want it transformed, and that is happiness. I want happiness in spite of everything. Can I abolish queues, feed the hungry, stop the war? I cannot. And as I cannot, must I renounce happiness and merge in the misery? No. But can I, shall I be happy? . . ."

Ivan Ilyitch crossed the bridge and without noticing the way, he reached the Palace Embankment. Tall electric lamps, shaken by the wind, burned brightly. Snow-dust flew with a rustling sound over the bare paving-blocks. The windows of the Winter Palace were dark and desolate. At a striped sentry-box near a snow-heap stood a giant guard in a big coat. His rifle was pressed against his chest by folded arms.

Ivan Ilyitch pulled himself up suddenly.

"The fact that I think about it means that there can't be any happiness for me. We want to live by love and the whole world lives by hate. . . ."

He walked faster, battling with the wind at first, then turning his back on it. He went round the palace and walked in the square. Had the square been full of people, it seemed to him that he would have got up on the plinth of the Alexander column and told them all the plain truth and every one would have believed him.

"You cannot live like this any longer," he would have said; "the state is built on hatred, frontiers are determined in hatred, every one of us is a small fortress with aiming guns. Life is limited and terrible. All the world is stifling in hate; people are exterminating each other, rivers of blood flow. Is it not enough for you? Are you still blind? Must you have man kill man in every house? Come to yourselves, throw down your arms, break the boundaries, open the doors and windows to the free wind. Let the way of the cross pass throughout the earth and strengthen it with the water of life in the name of the Holy Ghost. That is the way we can live. We have land enough for corn, meadows for cattle, hilly slopes for vineyards; the inexhaustible womb of the earth is ours. There is room enough for all.

Don't you realize that you are still living in the ignorance of the Middle Ages? . . ."

Ivan Ilyitch came out on the Moika, caught his breath and laughed aloud. What a walk indeed! He looked at his watch. It was five o'clock. Crunching over the snow, a big car with extinguished lamps came round a corner. At the steering-wheel sat an officer in an open cloak. His narrow, clean-shaven face was pale and his eyes were glassy like the eyes of a drunken man. Behind him sat another officer with his cap pushed to the back of his head. His face was invisible. In both hands he held a mat bundle. The third man in the car was a civilian in a tall caracal cap with the collar of his coat raised. He stood up and shook the shoulders of the man at the steering-wheel. The car drew up by the bridge. Ivan Ilyitch saw the three of them jump out on the snow, they pulled out the bundle and dragged it a few paces along the snow, then with difficulty they lifted it and carried it to the middle of the bridge and dropped it over the railing. The two officers immediately went back to the car, the civilian bent over and looked after it for some time, then he put up the collar of his coat and ran after the others. The car set off at full speed and disappeared.

"What a dirty thing to do!" Ivan Ilyitch said; he had watched the proceedings with bated breath. He went on to the bridge, but stare as hard as he would at the big black hole in the ice, he could not see anything; there was only a gurgling of stinking, warm water from a sewer.

The lamps burned brightly on the deserted Moika embankment; desolation was reflected in the darkened windows; the misty sky was just the same, leaden and frosty. "What a dirty thing to do!" Ivan Ilyitch muttered again,

scowling as he walked along the railings of the canal. On the Nevsky he at last found an izvozchik, a starved old man with a heavy-jawed horse. Ivan Ilyitch closed his eyes as he fastened the apron. His whole body ached with weariness.

"I love, that is vital, real," he thought. "It doesn't matter what I do, if it comes from my love, it must be good."

XXXIII

The bundle which had been dropped by the three men into the hole of the ice was the body of Rasputin. In order to kill this superhuman, strong peasant he was first made drunk with wine, mixed with potassium cyanide; then he was shot in the breast and in the head and back of the neck and his head was at last smashed open with a castette. Yet for all that, when his body was discovered twenty-four hours later, a medical examination established that Rasputin had only ceased to breathe when under the ice in the Moika.

The murder became a license for all that happened two months later—the license of blood. Rasputin had on more than one occasion declared that with his death the throne would crumble and the Romanov dynasty would collapse. This savage and violent man must have had a presentiment of evil, such as dogs feel before a death in the house, and he died unwillingly, this last supporter of the throne, peasant, horse-thief and wandering fanatic.

His death brought a sinister depression on the court and rejoicing throughout the land; people congratulated each other over it. Nikolai Ivanovitch wrote to his wife from Minsk, "The night the news arrived, the officers of the Commander-in-Chief's staff ordered seven dozen bottles of champagne for the mess and the soldiers yelled 'Hurrah' throughout the whole front."

After a few days the murder was forgotten by the country, but not by the court. At the court they believed in his prophecy and with gloomy forebodings made

ready for the revolution. Petersburg was secretly divided into sectors. Machine-guns were demanded from the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch and when he refused them, they were ordered from Archangel and four hundred and twenty-two of them were placed in attics on the street-crossings. The press was still more restricted; newspapers appeared with half their columns bare, but proprietors, not to be outdone, printed significant headlines on the bare columns which had a greater effect on the angry readers than the screaming articles.

The Empress wrote her husband desperate letters to stimulate his will and spirit. Once more she demanded the complete abolition of the Imperial Duma. The Emperor, like one bewitched, stayed at Mogilov among his faithful (there was no doubt of this) tens of millions of bayonets. Women rioters and howling Petersburg queues were more terrible to face than an army of three empires, pressing on the Russian front. In Mogilov, at the same time, unknown to the Emperor, the Head of Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, General Alexeiev, a clever man and ardent patriot, was preparing a plan to arrest the Empress and destroy the German party.

In January, to anticipate a spring offensive, an order was signed for an attack on the Northern Front. At the opening of artillery fire, a snowstorm began. The men advanced through deep snow amid a howling storm and the hurricane of bursting shells. Dozens of aëroplanes that had gone up to help the advancing units were beaten down by the wind and in the darkness were mown down by our own as well as the enemy machine-gun fire. For the last time Russia was making an attempt to break the iron ring that hemmed her in, for the last time Russian peasants in white shrouds, driven by a polar storm, were fighting for an Empire embracing one-sixth part

of the world, for the autocracy, dangerous at one time to the world, but now become a lost conception, unfriendly and incomprehensible.

The battle raged for ten days; thousands of the living were buried under the snow. The offensive stopped and froze. The front had once again congealed in the snow.

XXXIV

Ivan Ilyitch had counted on the holidays to pay a visit to Moscow but the works commissioned him to go to Sweden, from whence he returned only in February. He immediately set about arranging a three weeks' leave and telegraphed to Dasha to say that he was coming on the 26th.

For a week before his departure he was on duty at the workshops. Ivan Ilyitch was struck by the change that had come over the place in his absence. The management was polite and solicitous as it had never been before and the workers showed their teeth. The men were so savage that at any moment it seemed some one would shout:

"Stop work! Smash the lathes!"

The men were particularly incensed by the proceedings in the Imperial Duma, where a debate was in progress on the food question. The proceedings showed that the government could hardly preserve its dignity; it parried the attack with its last efforts. The Tsar's ministers no longer talked like fairy heroes, but in human speech, which was a little whining. The men knew that the speeches of ministers were not true and that the truth was on every one's lips. There were dark and sinister rumours of a near collapse of the front and rear from starvation.

On his last duty Ivan Ilyitch observed a peculiar excitement among the men. They would leave their lathes every moment and confer together. When he asked Vasili Rublev what these conferences were about, Vaska

angrily put on his wadding coat and left the shop, banging the door behind him.

"He's got vicious, the rascal Vasili," Ivan Rublev said. "He's managed to get a revolver from somewhere and keeps it in his pocket."

Vasili soon returned and the men left their lathes and surrounded him. "'Statement of Lieut.-General Khabalov, Commander of the troops of the Petersburg Military District,'" Vaska read aloud with emphasis, holding a white bill in his hand. "'During the last few days the amount of flour allowed to the bakeries and the quantity of bread baked have been the same as formerly.'"

"That's a lie!" voices were instantly raised. "There's been no bread at all for three days."

"'There ought not to be a shortage of bread,'" Vaska read on.

"He's proposed and disposed," voices laughed sarcastically.

"'If there has not been enough bread in some shops that is because people fearing a shortage, have hoarded bread to make rusks. . . .'"

"Who's made rusks? Let him show us the rusks!" voices yelled. "We ought to jam a rusk down that lieutenant-general's throat!"

"Silence, comrades!" Vaska commanded. "Let Khabalov be made to show us those rusks. We must go out into the street, comrades. . . . From the Baltic Works four thousand men are marching on the Nevsky. And the women are coming out from the Viborg Works. They've fed us on statements long enough!"

"He's right. Let them show us bread! We want bread!"

"They won't show you any bread, comrades. There isn't enough flour in the town to last for more than three days. Trains are standing still in the Urals. . . .

Elevators there are filled with corn! In Cheliabinsk three million poods of meat are rotting at the station! In Siberia they are making candles of butter. . . . And the Tsar's government expects the workers to eat dogs. . . ."

There stepped out from the crowd surrounding Rublev a fellow with crooked shoulders, whose grimy face twitched. He scowled and beat his breast and shook his head.

"Why are you saying that to me? Why are you saying that to me?"

"Arise! Throw down your work! Put out the furnaces!" came shouts from all sides and the men rushed about the shop.

Vaska Rublev went up to Ivan Ilyitch. His long eyelashes covered his eyes, his lips trembled.

"Go!" he said audibly. "Go, while you are yet whole!"

Ivan Ilyitch slept badly for the remainder of that night and awoke with a feeling of restlessness in every part of his body. The morning was cloudy; drops fell on the gutter without. Ivan Ilyitch tried to collect his thoughts. His restlessness would not leave him and the drops fell irritatingly, into his very brain, as it were.

"I ought not to wait till the 26th, I ought to go today," he thought. He took off his nightshirt and went into the bathroom where he turned on the douche and stood under the icy, cutting spray.

There was a great deal to be done before his departure. Ivan Ilyitch had some coffee and went out. He jumped into a tram-car, which was full of people, and here, too, he felt restless. The passengers sat in their usual gloomy

silence, their knees pressed close together and angrily pulling the skirts of their clothing from beneath a neighbour. It was sticky underfoot; the raindrops rolled down the windows and the bell jingled irritatingly on the front platform.

Opposite Ivan Ilyitch sat a war civil-servant with a patchy, yellowish face; his clean-shaven mouth was set in a crooked smile and his tin-coloured eyes, with an animation clearly unusual to them, looked round wonderingly. When he observed them, Ivan Ilyitch noticed that all the passengers were looking round in dismay and wonder.

The car stopped at the corner of Bolshoi Prospect. The passengers immediately began to fidget and to look about them; a few jumped off the platform. The driver took the key and put it in the breast of his blue coat and opening the door in front, he said in anger and alarm:

"The car is not going any further."

Over the whole of the Kamennoostrovsky and the Bolshoi Prospect, as far as the eye could see, tram-cars stood. The pavements were black with people. Rowdy boys, products of the war, tore about wildly. The iron shutters of a shop now and again came down with a bang. A thin, wet snow fell.

A man appeared on top of one of the cars. His long coat was unfastened; he pulled his cap off his head and was shouting something below. "O-o-o-o!" a sigh went through the crowd. The man tied a rope to the roof of the car, then he stood up and again tore off his cap. "O-o-o-o" went through the crowd. The man jumped on the road. The crowd rolled back and then a group of people could be seen slipping over the snow as they tugged at a rope tied to the car. The car leant over; the crowd moved back; boys whistled. The car rocked,

but remained standing; the wheels crashed. The group tugging at the rope were joined by other people who came running silently from all sides. The car swayed and crashed over; there was a sound of broken glass. The silent crowd surged to the overturned car.

"There are going to be some doings now!" a voice remarked behind Ivan Ilyitch cheerfully, and then several voices sarcastically took up the refrain, "You fell a victim in the fatal war. . . ."

On the way to the Nevsky Ivan Ilyitch noticed the same wondering glances, the same anxious faces. All over the place, like small whirlpools, eager listeners seethed round news-bearers. Fat porters stood in doorways, housemaids stuck their noses out and peeped up the street, where a crowd surged at the top. Some man with a portfolio, a well-kept beard and an unfastened coat—an advocate evidently—asked a porter: "Tell me, good fellow, what is that crowd? What is happening there?"

"They are asking for bread. It's a riot, sir."

"Ah!"

Higher up the street, at the crossing, stood a pale, tear-stained lady with a sick dog in her arms, whose hanging back trembled. The lady kept asking every one who passed, "What is the crowd for? What do they want?"

"It looks like revolution, madam," the man in the fur coat answered tearfully as he passed.

Walking along the pavement with the skirt of his short coat flapping smartly was a workman with an unwholesome lynx-like face which twitched. "Comrades," he whined, turning suddenly, "how much longer will they drink our blood?"

A fat-cheeked boy officer stopped an izvozchik and,

clutching his girdle, stared at the crowd as at an eclipse of the sun.

"Look! look!" sobbed a passing workman.

The crowd had grown denser and now filled the whole street; it hummed excitedly and moved in the direction of the bridge. In three places white flags had been put out. Like shavings passers-by were gathered up and taken along with the stream. Ivan Ilyitch followed the crowd across the bridge. Several horsemen were coming across the misty, snow-covered Marsov Square, but on seeing the crowd, they pulled up their horses and drew near slowly. One of them, a ruddy-complexioned colonel with a divided beard, saluted with a smile. Some people in the crowd began to sing mournfully. From the mist of the Summer Garden, from the dark bare branches of the trees, like pieces of stuff there rose up the crows that had at one time frightened the murderer of the Emperor Paul.

Ivan Ilyitch was walking in front. He felt a spasm in his throat. He coughed, but his agitation merely increased and the tears were ready to come to his eyes. When he reached the Engineers' castle, he turned down the left to the Liteini Prospect.

On the Petersburg side of the Liteini Prospect there was another crowd which stretched far across the bridge. All along its way at the gates stood curious onlookers and at every window excited faces were seen.

Ivan Ilyitch stopped at the gate beside an old civil-

servant, whose hanging cheeks shook. Further on to the right, a chain of soldiers stood motionless across the street, leaning on their rifles.

The crowd drew near and slackened speed. From the midst of it, frightened voices cried, "Stop! stop!" Immediately thousands of women's shrill voices yelled, "Bread! bread! bread!"

"This can't be allowed!" said the civil-servant with a severe look at Ivan Ilyitch over the tops of his spectacles. Just then two yard-porters issued from the gate and began to push the onlookers away with their shoulders. The civil-servant's cheeks trembled, some girl in pince-nez exclaimed, "How dare you, you fool!" The gate was nevertheless closed. All the way down the street gates and doors were being shut and frightened voices cried, "Don't! don't!"

The screaming crowd moved onwards. A youth with a womanish, pimply face in a broad-brimmed hat, sprang out in front.

"The banners in front! The banners in front!" voices shouted.

At this moment, in front of the chain of soldiers, there appeared a tall, small-waisted officer in a fur cap. He held his hand on his hip by his pistol-case and cried aloud: "There is an order to fire. . . . I don't want bloodshed. . . . Disperse. . . ."

"Bread! bread! bread!" voices cried. And the crowd moved on the soldiers. People with maddened eyes squeezed past Ivan Ilyitch.

"Bread! Down with the dogs!" One man fell and caught Ivan Ilyitch by the leg. His wrinkled face contorted pitifully and he cried senselessly, "I hate! I hate!"

Slowly, throughout the street came a sound like the tearing of calico. The crowd was stilled. Some school-

boy seized his cap and dived into the crowd. . . . The civil-servant raised his sinewy hand to make the sign of the cross.

The volley had been fired in the air and it was not followed by a second. The crowd, however, retreated. A part of it dispersed and the remainder moved with the flag to the Znamensky Square. Some caps and galoshes were left in the yellowish snow in the street. When he came out on the Nevsky Ivan Ilyitch again heard the roar of numerous voices. It came from a second crowd which was crossing the Neva from the Vasilov Island. The pavements were packed with well-dressed women, officers, students and foreigners. An English officer, with a ruddy childlike face, stood like a post with the usual stony expression on his face. Shopgirls with powdered faces and black ribbons in their hair were glued to the shop-windows. A tattered, dirty and angry crowd of working men and women walked in the middle of the broad, misty street, yelling, "Bread! bread! bread!"

By the pavement, an izvozchik, leaning over the front of his sleigh, was saying amiably to a scared, red-faced woman, "You can see for yourself that I can't go on. A fly couldn't get by."

"Go on, you fool, and don't dare talk to me!"

"I'm not to be called a fool now. . . . Get out of the sleigh. . . ."

On the pavement, passers-by poked their heads into the groups standing about and listened and talked excitedly.

"A hundred people have been killed on the Liteini. . . ."

"It's not true. They've only killed a pregnant woman and an old man."

"Why did they kill an old man?"

"It's Protopopov who does everything. He's mad."

"You're right. . . . Progressive paralysis."

"I've heard some impossible news. . . ."

"What is it? What is it?"

"There's a general strike."

"What? Water and electric light?"

"I wish to God it were true. . . ."

"They're splendid fellows, the workers!"

"Don't rejoice too soon. It may be crushed. . . ."

"Mind you are not crushed with that expression on your face. . . ."

Ivan Ilyitch, annoyed at the loss of time, pushed his way through the crowds, called at three addresses on business without finding one of the people he wanted at home, and in an angry state of mind, walked back along the Nevsky.

The street had assumed its former aspect. Sleighs flew past, yard-porters came out to clear away the snow and at the crossing, a tall man appeared in a long, black coat. Above the heads of the excited crowd and the muddled thoughts of the inhabitants, he raised his white club aloft, that magic sceptre of order. As they crossed the street, the passers-by thought, "All right, my dear fellow, you wait till the time comes!"

But no one dreamed that the time had already come, and the pillar of a man with the big moustache and the club was no more than a shadow which would disappear tomorrow from the street-crossing, disappear from life, from the minds of men. . . .

"Teliegin, Teliegin! Stop, you deaf grouse!"

Ivan Ilyitch turned round. Strukov, the engineer, with

his cap at the back of his head and eyes sparkling, was running towards him.

"Where are you off to? Angry? Let us go to a café."

He took Ivan Ilyitch by the arm and dragged him up the first floor of a café. The room was filled with cigar smoke, which made the eyes smart. Men in top hats, in fur caps, in hastily thrown on coats were arguing, shouting and jumping up from their chairs. Strukov pushed his way to the window and sat down opposite Ivan Ilyitch, laughing.

"The ruble is falling!" he exclaimed, clutching the table with both hands. "Paper money is going to the devil! Now we know where the power lies! Tell me what you've seen!"

"I was on the Liteini; they fired there, but I think in the air. . . ."

"What do you think of it all?"

"I think today's events will make the government tackle the transport of provisions seriously."

"It's too late now!" Strukov bawled, banging the palm of his hand on the glass table-top. "Too late! . . . We've eaten our own bowels! There's an end to the war; it's finished! There's an end to everything! Everything will go to the devil. . . . Do you know what they are demanding in the factories? They insist on the formation of soviets of workers' deputies. They've no faith in anything but soviets! And they demand immediate demobilization. . . ."

"You must be drunk," Ivan Ilyitch said. "When I was at the works at night, I heard nothing at all. . . . If any demands are made, it must be you alone who are making them. . . ."

Strukov threw back his head and laughed. He kept his eyes fixed on Teliegin.

"It would be well to smash the machine. The very time, eh?"

"I don't think so. . . . I don't see anything good in it. . . ."

"No government, no troops, no policemen, none of these swine in top hats. . . . To reduce to primeval chaos." Strukov suddenly clenched his tobacco-stained teeth and the pupils of his eyes became like points.

"To let loose horror, more horrible than the war. . . . Everything is damned and defiled and hideous. What if we destroy it all, like Sodom and Gomorrah . . . and leave a clean place?" Beneath the sweat on his forehead a vein stood out. "That is what everybody wants and you want it too. Only I say it and you dare not."

"You've been in the rear throughout the war," Teliegin said angrily, looking at Strukov with disgust, "but I was at the front and know that in 1914 we also wanted to fight and to destroy. Now we don't want it. We destroyed, but we fought. Whereas you who have stayed behind in the rear are only now getting a taste for war. You've got the souls of marauders and hooligans; your idea is to plunder, burn! I've studied you for some time. You want to destroy, but when you yourself have to touch blood, you find it horrible. . . ."

"You're a small man, Teliegin; you've got a lower middle-class mind."

"Perhaps, perhaps. . . ."

Ivan Ilyitch returned home early and immediately went to bed. He went to sleep for a moment only, however, then he sighed, turned over on his back and opened his eyes, wide awake. On the ceiling of his

bedroom the light of a street-lamp was reflected. There was a smell of leather; an open trunk stood on the table. In the trunk, which he had bought in Stockholm, was a beautiful leather and silver dressing-case, a present for Dasha. Ivan Ilyitch experienced a tender feeling for it and every day he took it out of its silky paper wrappings and looked at it. He could see a picture of Dasha in a railway carriage with long windows, as in all Russian trains, sitting on the seat in a travelling dress and on her lap, this thing, smelling of leather and perfumes, this token of carefree happiness, of wonderful journeys with unfamiliar landscapes without and Dasha's pensive face within. If he could but lift the end of her veil, tied in a knot at the nape of her neck, and press it to his lips. . . .

"Oh, dear! Something irreparable has happened today!" Ivan Ilyitch thought, and his memory, recalling everything he had seen, replied confidently: "In the town there is a sinister non-resistance to anything that may happen. A riot? Let there be a riot. Shooting? Let them shoot. A tram-car broken? All right. Workers crowd into the Nevsky? All right. Workers are dispersed by firing? All right. Anything is better than the stifling stench of a hopeless war."

Ivan Ilyitch leant on his elbows and looked out of the window at the misty sky, where, in a dull, purple glow, the light of the town was reflected. He could feel with what hate and anguish must those who had cried for bread today regard the town. And those who had heard the cry were perhaps looking at it as he was in sad indifference. Unloved and hated town, friendly to no one. . . .

At half-past eight Ivan Ilyitch was awakened by a

knock at the door. It was the porter's wife, who had brought his newspaper. Ivan Ilyitch glanced through the whole of the six pages. It was reported that on the 23rd February in the Mitavsk district, in the Olae region, there had been some cross-firing and the enemy had attempted an attack with a strength of two companies, but were driven back to their trenches by our fire. There had been an explosion at Rostov-on-Don. A boiler had burst at the baths and a hundred and sixty people had run out naked into the street in the frost. The English parliament had passed a resolution demanding the immediate introduction of Home Rule. Two sugar manufacturers, profiteers, had been released from the Kiev prison at the request of the high authorities. Then came a report of a debate on the food question in the Imperial Duma, but not a word was mentioned of the events of yesterday. Not a single soul nor a pen was stirred by the presentiment that the date, February 24th, was the last day of the old régime.

Ivan Ilyitch left the house at twelve o'clock. The wide, misty street was deserted. Snow fell. Behind the steaming windows of a florist's shop, in a crystal vase, was a gorgeous bunch of red roses with large drops of water on them. Ivan Ilyitch looked at it lovingly from out the falling snow. "Oh, God! Oh, God!"

A Cossack horse patrol of five men came out of a side street. The last of them turned his horse and trotted up to the pavement, where three men in caps and tattered coats tied with girdles were walking quietly in animated talk. The men stopped and one of them, making some amiable remark, took hold of the horse's bridle. The

gesture was so unusual that Ivan Ilyitch's heart jumped. The Cossack laughed and, throwing back his head, let go his impatient horse and caught up with his fellows. They trotted away and disappeared in the mist of the street.

When he reached the quay Ivan Ilyitch saw groups of excited people. No one had been able to settle down after the events of yesterday. They conferred, exchanged rumours and news and many went on to the Nevsky. There, all along the stone parapet, like a black ant heap, several thousand people moved in the snow. By the bridge stood a group of rowdy men, bawling at the soldiers who blocked the way across the bridge and stood against the railings to the very end, barely visible in the mist and falling snow.

"Why do you block up the bridge? Let us pass!" the rowdy crowd shouted.

"We want to get to the town."

"It's a shame to oppress the population like this!"

"The bridge is for walking across, not for the likes of you. . . ."

"Are you Russians or not? Let us pass!"

A tall non-commissioned officer wearing four St. George medals was pacing from side to side of the bridge, jingling his big spurs. When the crowd began to swear at him he turned his melancholy pock-marked yellowish face.

"I say, how you do talk!" His twisted moustache trembled. "I can't let you cross the bridge. If you attempt to I shall fire."

"The soldiers won't fire!" the rowdy set yelled.

"They've stuck you up there, you pock-marked devil! You dog!"

The non-commissioned officer again turned and spoke,

and though his voice was harsh and imperative as a military voice should be, in his words wonder and alarm could be detected as in the words of every one these past three days. The crowd was conscious of it and swore and pushed against the barrier.

Some tall man in crooked pince-nez, a scarf wrapped round his long neck, came up to the crowd and spoke in a loud voice.

"They interfere with our movements; barriers are put up everywhere; chains are put across bridges; it is a mockery. Are we not to be allowed to move freely about the town now? Citizens, ignore the soldiers; go to the other side across the ice."

"Right! Across the ice! Hurrah!" the crowd shouted, and instantly several men ran down the snow-covered stone steps to the river. The tall man with his scarf flying behind him, set off resolutely across the ice, past the bridge. The soldiers bent over and called from aloft: "Hi! turn back or we'll fire! Turn back, you long devil!"

The man, however, walked on without turning. More and more people followed him. They clattered down to the ice and their black forms ran over the snow. The soldiers yelled after them from the bridge, the people put their hands to their mouths and yelled back. One soldier aimed, but another touched him on the shoulder and he did not fire.

It turned out later that none of the people who went out into the street had any set plan, but when they were confronted by barriers on the bridges and street crossings, as is always the case, they instantly wanted to do the thing that was forbidden, they wanted to cross the bridge

and to collect in crowds. Imaginations became heated. A rumour spread through the town that the disorders were organized by some one.

At the end of the second day the units of the Pavlovsky Regiment lay down on the Nevsky and opened a longitudinal fire at the crowds and odd passers-by. The populace began to realize that something like revolution was happening.

But where was its hotbed, and where were its leaders, no one knew. The troops did not know, nor did the Third Section, nor the police, nor, moreover, did the dictator and favourite, the Siberian cloth manufacturer, who, at one time in the Troitska Hotel in Simbirsk, had had his head smashed open with a door panel by a landowner named Naumov. The damage caused to the skull and brain had brought on headaches and neurasthenia, and later, when he was entrusted with the government of the Russian Empire, fatal confusion. The hotbed of the revolution was everywhere, in every house, in every citizen's head seething with thoughts of anger and discontent. The police caught at shadows. They had, in fact, to arrest two million, four hundred thousand inhabitants. The workers' demonstration of the 23rd February dropped the spark and the fire kindled.

The whole of that day Ivan Ilyitch had spent in the street. Like every one he felt a strange and continuous dizziness. He could feel the excitement grow in the town almost to madness. People were cast into a general turmoil, into an incoherent mass with neither reason nor will, and this mass wandered excitedly through the streets,

seeking and longing for the flash, which, though blinding, would weld them into a coherent whole.

The excited human herd had so far gone to pieces that the firing even had little effect on anybody. Wildly the people rushed to the two corpses of women in print dresses and the corpse of an old man in a raccoon coat, who were lying at the corner of Vladimir Street. . . .

When the volleys became more frequent, the people stole away along the walls.

At dusk the firing ceased. A cold wind blew which cleared the sky and drove the heavy clouds in masses to the sea, and through them floated the sombre glow of the setting sun. Low above the town, where the sky was coal black, hung the clear-cut crescent of the moon.

The street lamps were not lighted that night. Windows were dark and front doors closed. Rifles were piled all along the deserted, misty Nevsky. Sentries stood at street crossings. The moonlight played now on a mirror-like window, now on the tram lines, now on the steel of bayonets. It was quiet and still. Only in the houses, in dead sheeplike voices, the telephone receivers murmured mad words about the events of the day.

On the morning of the 25th February, the Znamensky Square was filled with troops and police. Before the North Hotel were mounted police on golden, slender-legged, dancing horses. Foot police were standing around the monument and in groups about the square. At the station were bearded and merry Cossacks in battered fur caps, with bags of hay behind them on the saddle. The dirty grey coats of the Pavlovsky men could be seen in the Nevsky direction.

With a suit-case in his hand, Ivan Ilyitch was walking up the stone entrance to the station, from whence there was a view of the whole square. In the middle of the square on a blood-red block of granite, mounted on a huge horse, whose head was drooping from the weight of its rider, sat the Emperor, heavy as the gravity of the earth. His stern shoulders and small cap were covered with snow. He sat facing north.

At his base, pushing from the direction of five streets, were yelling, shouting and swearing crowds.

Just as on the bridge the day before, the soldiers, mostly the Cossacks, rode up to them in pairs and abused and jeered at them. The groups of policemen, tall, gloomy men, were silent; there was evident uncertainty among them. It was like the anxiety felt before battle, which Ivan Ilyitch knew well. The enemy was already on your shoulders; it was clear that you had to act, but you were ordered to wait and the minutes dragged on painfully. Suddenly the station door flew open and on the steps there appeared a pale gendarme officer, wearing the shoulder-straps of a colonel. He was in a short coat and had a new leather strap across his shoulder. He drew himself up and looked round the square; his blue eyes alighted on the face of Ivan Ilyitch. He ran lightly down the steps between the Cossacks, who made way for him, and spoke some words to a Cossack captain, looking up into the latter's face. The Cossack officer, sitting easily in his saddle, listened to him with a crooked smile. As he spoke the colonel motioned in the direction of the Old Nevsky and walked away through the snow in the square with a light, springy gait. There came up to him an inspector, tightly belted round his huge stomach; his hand trembled as he saluted; his face was purple. . . . From the direc-

tion of the Old Nevsky the cries of approaching crowds grew louder and singing could be heard. Some one clutched Ivan Ilyitch by the leg and a man scrambled up beside him, an excited, sweaty man in a wadding coat, no cap and a red scratch across his dirty face.

"Brothers, Cossacks!" he cried in that terrible, rending voice with which people cry at murder or bloodshed, a wild voice of the steppes which made the heart sink and the eyes gaze with madness. . . . "Brothers, they tried to kill me. . . . It means death for us. . . . Brothers, save us. . . ."

The Cossacks turned in their saddles and stared at him in silence. Their faces grew pale, their eyes opened wide.

Meanwhile, on the Old Nevsky, the black heads of the approaching Kolpinsky workers seethed. A red flag tied to a pole flapped in the wind. The mounted police drew away from the North Hotel and immediately unsheathed swords flashed in their hands. The crowd shrieked wildly. Ivan Ilyitch once more saw the gendarme colonel. He was running with one hand on his revolver case and the other waving at the Cossacks. The Kolpinsky workers threw lumps of ice and stones at the colonel and the police. The golden, slender-legged horses danced more wildly. Revolvers fired faintly and smoke could be seen at the base of the monument. It was the police firing at the Kolpinsky crowds. Immediately, among the Cossacks, some ten paces from the spot where Ivan Ilyitch was standing, a red, hook-nosed Don mare reared up, and the Cossack, bending down to her neck, with a few bounds was at the colonel, his sword unsheathed on the way. He swished it with a back stroke and again the mare reared.

Every one rushed to the scene of the Cossack's mur-

der. The crowd broke the barriers and poured into the square. . . . Faint firing could be heard here and there, which was drowned in the general cry of: "Hurrah! hurrah!"

"Teliegin, what are you doing here?"

"I decided to go away today. I don't care what it's on, a goods train or an engine."

"Give up the idea. You can't go now! There's a revolution on, my dear fellow. . . ." Antoshka Arnoldov, unshaven. with red eyelashes and rolling eyes, was clutching Ivan Ilyitch by the lapel of his coat with trembling fingers.

"Did you see them cut off the gendarme's head? A wonderful sight! You don't understand, you fool, there's a revolution!" Antoshka spoke as in a fever. They were standing pressed against the station wall by the crowd. "The Litovsk and Volinsky regiments refused to fire this morning and a company of the Pavlovsky Regiment walked out into the street with their arms. The town is in a thorough muddle, no one knows anything. Soldiers are swarming on the Nevsky like flies, afraid to go to their barracks. . . . Our newspaper has arranged a feeding centre in a hair-dressing saloon in honour of Bakunin. . . . Come to 'The Red Bells' tonight. You'll hear everything there. . . ."

Antoshka let go of Teliegin and dived into the crowd. Ivan Ilyitch pushed his way through the noisy crowd in the station waiting-rooms and reached the platform. Trains were standing on the lines, the men on them had struck work.

XXXV

Dasha and Katia, dressed in big coats and with down shawls on their heads, were walking along the dimly lighted Malaya Nikitskaya. A thin sheet of ice crunched beneath their feet. In the cold, green and starry sky hung the two-horned moon, thin and clear. A dog barked within a gate here and there. Dasha was smiling into the wet down of her shawl and listening to the crunching of the ice.

"Katia!"

"Dasha, my dear, don't stop, or we shall be late."

"Katia, if some instrument could be invented and put here"—Dasha placed her hand on her breast—"it would describe some extraordinary thing." . . . Dasha began to sing softly and clearly. "You see, this is repeated in another tone, like this." She sang and then laughed.

Katia took her by the arm. "Come on, come on." After a few paces Dasha stopped once more.

"Katia, do you believe there's a revolution?"

"Yes. Can't you feel the excitement in the very air?"

"That's because of the spring, Katia. See how green the sky is."

In the distance the yellow light of an electric lamp shone above the porch of the Law Club. Under the influence of the wild rumours from Petersburg the Cadet section had that evening organized a meeting for half-past nine to exchange impressions and to formulate a general course of action in these anxious days.

The sisters ran up to the second floor and without removing their coats, merely taking off their shawls, they

entered a hall, packed with people, who were listening to a ruddy-complexioned, bearded, burly gentleman, who was gesticulating agreeably with his hands.

"Events are moving with a dizzy rapidity." His teeth gleamed white as he spoke. "In Petersburg complete power was yesterday assumed by General Khabalov, who posted this bill all over the town: 'During the last few days there have been disorders in Petersburg, accompanied by force and attempts on the life of troops and police. I forbid all gathering in the street. I must warn the inhabitants of Petersburg that I have ordered the use of arms on the part of the troops, who will stop at nothing to restore order in the town!'" . . .

"Executioners!" A student's bass voice sounded through the hall. The speaker touched the bell.

"This announcement, as was to be expected, filled the cup of patience to overflowing. Twenty-five thousand troops of all arms of the Petersburg garrison went over to the side of the rebellion——"

Before he had time to finish the sentence, the hall rang with applause. Men jumped on their chairs, shouting and gesticulating, breaking the old rules. The speaker, smiling broadly, looked round at the stormy hall, touched the bell once more and continued:

"An important telephone message has just been received." He dived into the pocket of his check jacket, slowly pulled out and unfolded a slip of paper. "Today the President of the Imperial Duma, Mr. Rodzianko, dispatched a telegram to the Emperor: 'The situation is serious. Anarchy is rampant in the capital. The government is paralyzed. Transport, food and fuel supply are completely disorganized. Disorderly firing is going on in the streets. Troop units are firing on one another. It is

essential immediately to entrust some one who has the confidence of the country to form a new government. Delay is impossible. Any delay spells death. I pray God that in this hour the responsibility does not fall on a crowned head.' "

The ruddy-complexioned gentleman put down the paper and looked round the hall with merry eyes. All faces expressed intense curiosity. Moscow did not recall such a soul-stirring spectacle.

"We are on the verge of fulfillment of the greatest events in our history," he continued in a velvety, resonant voice. "It may be that at this moment"—he made a motion of the hand like Dante's in his statue—"the hopes of so many generations have been accomplished and the forlorn ghosts of the Decembrists are avenged. . . ."

"Oh, God!" unable to control herself, exclaimed some woman's voice in the centre of the hall.

"It may be that tomorrow Russia may mingle in the glad, brotherly chorus of freedom."

"Hurrah! Freedom!" excited voices yelled.

The gentleman sank into a chair and passed the back of his hand over his forehead. From the corner of the table there rose up a faded man with long, straw-coloured hair, a narrow face and a red, dull beard. He did not look at any one and began to speak in a drawling, nasal voice:

"The information we have just heard is extremely interesting. The position seems seriously to be leading to the abolition of the aristocratic, bureaucratic governing class. There is nothing unexpected in what has happened. If not today then in a month the troops were bound to revolt and the workers make an attempt to seize power." He pulled a handkerchief out from a side

pocket, blew his nose, folded the handkerchief and thrust it into his crushed jacket. Behind Dasha, who sat in the doorway on the same chair as her sister, some one asked:

"Who is that speaking?"

"Comrade Kusma," some one whispered quickly. "In 1905 he was in the soviet of workers' deputies. He has just returned from exile. He's a wonderful man."

"I do not share the former speaker's enthusiasm," continued Comrade Kusma, looking sleepily at the inkstand, "even if the Tsar's government were to renounce power in the next few days, it would still be foolish to rejoice, for power will fall into the paws of the bourgeois class and squabbling will be just as unavoidable in the future." He now raised his eyes and all could see that they were green, cold and dull. "It has long been time to cast off the Manilov fantasies. Revolution is a serious thing. Brotherly choruses and songs of freedom may entertain landless aristocrats, but are of no interest to the fattened sons of merchants." . . .

"Who is he? . . . What does he say? . . . Get him to shut up," angry voices exclaimed. Comrade Kusma raised his voice:

"The revolutionary process has been going on in the country for twenty years, and now we may consider it ripe. Our duty is to lance deep to let the pus out to the surface. We must bring face to face, without any intermediaries, the proletariat and the bourgeois and aristocratic classes. It is not freedom that we want, bandied about for a hundred years like a prostitute by petty shopkeepers and drivelling poets; we want civil war. . . ."

His last words were hardly distinguishable for the noise in the hall. A few men in morning coats rushed to the table. Comrade Kusma stepped back, got down from

the platform and went out by a side door. There rose in his place a well-known worker in child education, a stout woman in pince-nez, with a nervous twitch.

"We have just heard a revolting . . . "

Dasha, just then, heard some one whisper tenderly into her ear: "Good evening, my dear."

Without turning she sprang up. Ivan Ilyitch stood in the doorway. She looked at him. He was the handsomest man in the world, her very own. As on more than one occasion, Ivan Ilyitch was amazed that Dasha was different from what he had imagined her to be. The hot colour had risen to her cheeks. Her eyes were a transparent grey-blue and bottomless, like two cool lakes. She was so absolutely perfect that Ivan Ilyitch turned pale. "Good evening," Dasha said softly and took his arm. They walked out into the street.

In the street Dasha stopped and looked at Ivan Ilyitch with a smile. She sighed, raised her arms and kissed him on the lips. Her lips were tender and trusting. There was a smell of fur about her and the charm of feminine perfumes. In silence she took his arm again and they walked on over the crunching crust of ice, sparkling in the light of the moon, which hung low over the middle of the street in the dark green depths of the sky.

"Do you love me, Ivan?"

"Dasha!"

"I do love you, Ivan! I only realize it now. I did so long for you to come!"

"I couldn't, you know that." . . .

"You are not angry that I wrote you those nasty letters? You say anything in a letter . . ."

"It seems incredible that you should love me."

"Whom should I love, then?"

"You don't understand. . . . When I saw you stand up and looked at you, my heart was torn." . . .

Ivan Ilyitch stopped and looked at the sweet, smiling face raised to his. It looked particularly sweet and simple in the town shawl, beneath which were the dark lines of the eyebrows and the kind, tender eyes. He drew her gently to himself. She came close to him, still looking into his eyes. Once more he kissed her on the lips and they walked on.

"Will you stay long, Ivan?"

"I don't know with present events."

"There is revolution, Ivan."

"The things that are happening in Petersburg! I will tell you later." . . .

"Ivan, do you know . . ." Dasha was keeping pace with him and staring at the tips of his boots.

"Yes."

"I shall come with you . . . to your place." . . .

Ivan Ilyitch made no reply. Dasha could feel how he tried to take deep breaths and could not. She felt a tender pity for him.

XXXVI

The following day was remarkable only in that both were convinced of the relativity of time. Thus, when Ivan Ilyitch took an izvozchik from his hotel on the Tverskaya to Arbat Street, it seemed to him that they were about eighteen months getting there. "The time has gone by, sir, when you can hire an izvozchik for half a rouble," the man said; "people say they've got freedom in Petersburg. If not today then we'll get freedom in Moscow tomorrow. Look at that policeman! I should like to lash my whip in his face, the son of a dog. You wait, sir, we shall pay them all out!"

Ivan Ilyitch met Dasha at the dining-room door. She was in a white dressing-gown, but her ash-coloured hair was dressed. The bell of time struck, but time had stopped. The moment expanded and was filled with Dasha's words and laughter and with her soft hair sparkling in the morning sun. Ivan Ilyitch became restless when Dasha left him to go so much as to the other end of the table. Dasha raised her arms to open the doors of the sideboard and the broad sleeves of her dressing-gown slipped down. Ivan Ilyitch was sure that no human being could have such arms; only the two white vaccination marks above the elbow testified to their being human. Dasha took out the cups, talking and laughing meanwhile.

She made Ivan Ilyitch drink several cups of coffee and she talked and he talked, but human speech apparently had only meaning in time that moved ordinarily; today their words had no meaning. Ekaterina Dmitrievna, who was with them in the dining-room, heard Teliegin

and Dasha, in their wonder and joy, say nonsensical things, which they instantly forgot, about Dasha's vaccination marks, the revolution, the head cut off in Petersburg, Dasha's hair, which could not be dressed properly in any kind of way.

A maid brought in the newspapers. Ekaterina Dmitrievna opened the "Russkia Bedomosti" and gave an exclamation of surprise. She then read aloud the Emperor's fatal order about the dismissal of the Imperial Duma and, printed beneath it, in big type, was a telegram announcing the formation of the Committee of the Imperial Duma "for the restoration of order in Petrograd and for conducting public business."

Dasha and Teliegin were greatly astonished at this, but the other news in the "Russkia Bedomosti" Ekaterina Dmitrievna read to herself. "Come into my room," Dasha said to Teliegin and led him to it along a dark passage. She was the first to walk in and exclaiming, "Wait, wait, don't look!" she thrust some white object into a drawer.

Ivan Ilyitch saw Dasha's room for the first time. There was her dressing-table with the many incomprehensible objects on it, the severe, narrow white bedstead with two pillows, one large and one small. Dasha slept on the large one and put the small one under her elbow. There stood a big armchair by the window with a down shawl thrown over the back.

Dasha asked Ivan Ilyitch to sit down in the armchair, while she draw up a footstool and sat down opposite him, resting her elbows on her knees and her chin on her hands. Without blinking she looked into his face and asked him to tell her how he loved her. The bell of time sounded a second span.

"If I were offered everything there is, Dasha," he said, "I should not be any better off. Do you understand?" Dasha nodded. "Alone, what use am I to myself? What can I do with myself?" Dasha nodded. "Eat, walk, sleep, what for? What use are my hands and feet? Supposing I were fabulously rich, what would be the good of it? Think of what misery it is to be alone!" Dasha nodded. "But now that you sit there like that, I don't exist; I am not conscious of myself. I only feel you, happiness. You are everything, you are mine. . . . When I look at you my head swims; I wonder if you really breathe and live and are mine. Dasha, do you understand me a little?" . . .

"I remember," Dasha said, "when we were on deck and the wind blew and the wine sparkled in the cut-glass wine glasses, how I had a sudden feeling then that you would be my fellow-traveller."

"Do you remember the floating blue shadows?"

Dasha shut her eyes and it instantly seemed to her that she remembered some wonderful blue shadows. She remembered the gulls flying after the boat and the low banks and the sparkling, sunlit path in the distance on the water and how it had seemed to her that it would end in a shining sea of happiness. Dasha even remembered the dress she had worn. How many weary years had passed since then! She felt sorry for herself and intensely sorry for her sister, Katia. . . . She took Ivan Ilyitch's hands and hid her face in them and he could feel her tears between his fingers.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna rushed back from the Law Club in the evening, excited and happy. She related the news:

"In Petersburg power had passed to the Duma Committee and ministers had been arrested, but there was an

alarming rumour that the Emperor had left camp and that General Ivanov and a whole corps were marching on Petrograd to quell it. As for Moscow, tomorrow they have decided to storm the Kremlin and the arsenal. . . . Dasha and I are coming to you tomorrow morning, Ivan Ilyitch, to see the revolution." . . .

XXXVII

From the hotel window they could see a black stream of people moving along the narrow Tverskaya. There were caps, caps and shawls and yellow patches of faces. All windows were crammed with people and boys stood on the roofs.

Ekaterina Dmitrievna, her veil raised to her eyebrows, was saying as she first clutched Teliegin's arm and then Dasha's in hot fingers: "How awful! how awful!"

"I assure you, Daria Dmitrievna, the town is in a very peaceful mood," Ivan Ilyitch said. "Before you got here I rushed over to the Kremlin. Negotiations are proceeding there; the arsenal is apparently to be given up without firing." . . .

"But why are all these people here? What a lot of them there are! What are they going to do?"

Dasha was watching the agitated stream of heads and the outlines of roofs and towers. In the distance, above the crosses and the dull golden domes of the Kremlin churches, above the eagles with outspread wings and the pointed towers, daws circled, settling on the towers, flying up and disappearing in the misty height.

It seemed to Dasha that some great rivers had burst the ice and were overflowing the earth and that she and the man she loved were caught in the stream. There was nothing to do but to keep firm hold of his hand and to love him. Her heart fluttered in glad excitement like the birds on high.

"I must see everything. Let us go out," Katia said, seizing her coat.

The Town Hall, the headquarters of the revolutionaries, a dirty brick building with pillars that looked like bottles and balusters and balconies and towers, was decorated with red flags. Bits of fustian stuff were wound round the pillars and were suspended from the ledge of the porch of the main entrance. Near by, on the frozen paving-stones, were four guns on high wheels, looking like tarantulas. At the entrance, at the corners and the roof were bent machine-gun men wearing slips of red ribbon on their shoulder-straps. Huge crowds were looking in happy wonder at the dirty windows of the Town Hall. On the balcony above the porch there appeared an excited little person, who looked like a beetle, and flourishing his arms he began to shout some inaudible words. Enthusiastic cries came from the crowd.

When they had seen the flags and the guns, the crowd departed over the thawing, dirty snow, through the deep Tverskaya arch to the Red Square, where, at the Spassov and Nikolski gates the revolutionary troop units were negotiating with the emissaries of a reserve regiment, shut up in the Kremlin. In the grey daylight the big, thick, crumbling walls of the Kremlin, with its square towers and green ledges, and the two-headed eagle with spread wings on the spires, seemed older than ever. A flock of daws circled above the sad place, above the excited masses of simple folk, thrilled as at doomsday, and they flew away over the town, over the river Moscow.

Katia, Dasha and Teliegin were borne by the crowd to the door of the Town Hall. Coming from the direction

of the Tverskaya the noise of the crowd grew louder and louder. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved in the air.

"Comrades, let us pass, please. . . . Comrades, observe the rules . . ." came excited, youthful voices. Pushing through the crowd which made way reluctantly to the Town Hall entrance came four schoolboys, flourishing their rifles in the air and a pretty, untidy girl in a green hat, carrying a sword. They were conducting four big policemen, whom they had arrested, long-whiskered peasants with hands twisted behind them and lowered, solemn faces. In front of them was an inspector without a cap; at the temple of his dark-grey shaven head was a dark patch of congealed blood. With his red, piercing eyes, he glanced quickly at the intoxicated faces of the crowd. His shoulder-straps had been torn from his shoulder with the flesh.

"They've got their deserts at last!" said a voice in the crowd.

"They had their little game with us." . . .

"They've ruled over us long enough." . . .

"The damned tribe of them." . . .

"They ought to be tortured." . . .

"Come, boys, let us go for them." . . .

"Comrades, comrades! Let us pass! Observe the rules of the revolution," came the schoolboys' broken voices. They dashed to the entrance, pushing the policemen in front of them, and disappeared through the big doors. Several people managed to go in with them and among the number were Katia, Dasha and Teliegin.

In a bare, high, dimly lighted vestibule, machine-gun men squatted on the damp floor by their guns. A fat-cheeked student, evidently crazy with shouting and fatigue, rushed at all the newcomers.

"I don't want to know anything. Your pass!"

Some people showed their passes, others walked away with a wave of the hand and went up the broad staircase to the second floor. In a wide, dusty corridor, sleepy and silent soldiers, who would not let go of their rifles, were lying along the walls. Some were lazily chewing bread, others were snoring, hugging their knees. The idle crowd rushed past them and read the strange notices pinned to the doors and watched the excited commissaries running from room to room.

Katia, Dasha and Teliegin, when they had seen these wonders, pushed their way into a hall with two large windows hung with faded purple curtains. The semi-circular seats of the amphitheatre were also covered with purple. On the main wall, enclosing black empty spaces, were the golden frames of the portraits of the emperors. In front of them, her bronze cloak thrown off, was a marble statue of Katerine, smiling agreeably and subtly at her people.

The seats of the amphitheatre were filled with lounging, dirty, weary, unshaven men. Some of them slept with faces buried on the desks, others were leisurely pulling off the skin from sausages and eating bread. Below, in front of the smiling statue of Katerine, at a green baize table with a long fringe, twelve men were sitting. They were young men with lean faces and high cheekbones. One of them, who had long straw-coloured hair and beard, was picking an egg and throwing the shell on those cobwebs on the window. Suddenly she recollected where she had seen the man before who was picking the egg and where she had felt that deadly despair and seen those cobwebs on the window. Suddenly she recollected her dream. . . .

"Dasha, do you see Comrade Kusma at the table?" Katia asked.

A sharp-nosed girl with bobbed hair dashed up to Comrade Kusma at this moment and whispered something in his ear. He listened without turning and went on chewing his egg, then he got up and clucking his tongue, said:

"Gutchkov, the Mayor, has declared a second time that he will not allow arms to the workers. I move that without discussion we pass a protest against this aggressive action on the part of the revolutionary committee, which is becoming more and more bourgeois and reactionary."

There was a stir on the amphitheatre seats. Some one raised his head from his desk, yawned and stretched out a horny hand. Every one put up his hands in token of assent.

Teliegin at last found out (he had asked an undergrown schoolboy who was anxiously smoking a cigarette) that in the Katerine Hall a meeting of the soviet of workers' deputies was in progress and had lasted for two days.

At dinner time the quiet peasants of the reserve regiment which occupied the Kremlin, noticed the steam from the portable kitchens moving along the Red Square. They surrendered and opened the gate. A shout went throughout the square and caps flew in the air. On Lobnoe Mesto, where at one time there had lain the naked dead body of Dmitri the False, in the mask of a beast, with a piper's reed on his stomach, and from whence they used to proclaim the advent and downfall of Tsars and the freedom and bondage of the Russian people, on this same hillock, many times overgrown with burdock and again soaked with blood, there stood up a little soldier in a dirty coat. He bowed and pulled his cap over both ears and spoke some confused, incomprehensible words which were lost in the noise. He was a wretched little man, raked in

at the last mobilization from some unknown, remote spot, yet a lady, with her feathered hat at the back of her head, scrambled up to kiss him. And he was seized from the Lobnoe Mesto and carried on high by the shouting crowd.

On the Tverskaya, at that moment, a smart fellow from the crowd climbed up Skobelev's monument in front of the Governor-General's house and tied a red rag to his sword. There were shouts of "Hurrah!" Several mysterious persons found their way through the alley to the secret service department, from whence came a sound of breaking glass. Clouds of smoke rolled out and pieces of paper were carried by the wind. The crowd shouted "Hurrah!" On the Tverski Boulevard a famous woman writer, with tears in her eyes, was speaking at Pushkin's monument about the dawn of a new life. With the help of her husband, also a writer, she thrust a little red flag onto the pensive statue of Pushkin. The crowd shouted "Hurrah!" The whole town seemed intoxicated that day. People did not go home till late at night, and stood about in groups, talking, weeping with joy, embracing and waiting for some telegrams to come. After three years of misery, hatred and blood, the trusting, lethargic Slavonic soul, unconscious of its own measure, brimmed over. On the Bolshaya Dmitrovka, at half past eleven, a jeweller's shop was cleared and there were other robberies in many places besides.

Katia, Dasha and Teliegin returned home at dusk. They found that the housemaid, Liza, had gone to a meeting on the Prechistenki Boulevard, and that the cook was howling in the kitchen where she had locked herself in. Katia forced her to open the door.

"What is the matter, Marfusha?"

"The Tsar has been killed!" she said, covering her swollen mouth with her hands. She smelt of spirits.

"Don't talk such nonsense!" Katia said with annoyance. "No one has been killed!"

"The porter's wife swore he was."

"And what is that to you? Are you sorry for him?"

"No, but I'm frightened."

Katia put the kettle on the gas and went to lay the table. Dasha lay down on the drawing-room sofa. Teliegin sat at her feet. Dasha said:

"Ivan, my dear, if I should happen to fall asleep, wake me when tea comes. I want tea badly."

She turned over, put her hand under her cheek and said now in a sleepy, childish voice:

"I do love you."

A down shawl shone white in the twilight, the shawl Dasha had worn. Ivan Ilyitch sat motionless; his heart was full. At the top of the room a light appeared through a crack in the door. There was a rattling of cups and spoons. Presently the door opened and Katia came in. She sat down beside Ivan Ilyitch on the big sofa and put her hands round her knee. After a while she asked in a whisper:

"Is Dasha sleeping?"

"She asked me to wake her for tea."

"There is Marfusha howling in the kitchen that the Tsar has been killed. What is going to happen, Ivan Ilyitch? I feel as if all the dams were broken. My heart aches. I am anxious about Nikolai Ivanovitch. Do send him a telegram as early as possible in the morning. . . . Tell me, when are you and Dasha going to Petrograd?" . . .

Ivan Ilyitch did not reply. Katia turned her face to his and looked at him with her large eyes, so like Dasha's but more womanly and serious. She smiled gently and sighed, then she drew Ivan Ilyitch to herself and kissed him on the forehead.

The next morning the whole town poured into the streets. Along the Tverskaya, through the crowds and ceaseless shouting of hurrah, moved lorries full of soldiers, bristling with swords and bayonets. Boys rode astride the rattling guns. On the dirty piles of snow, along the pavement, maintaining public order, were young ladies with uplifted swords and strained faces and schoolboys who showed no mercy. This was the voluntary militia. Shopkeepers were climbing up steps, pulling down the Imperial eagle on their signs. A group of consumptive-looking girls from a tobacco factory marched about with a portrait of Leo Tolstoy, who looked severely at the strange doings with knitted brows. There could not be a war, it seemed, nor hatred. It seemed that all one had to do was to hang out a red flag on some high belfry and the whole world would realize there was no other force in the world than joy and freedom, love and life. . . .

When the telegram arrived announcing the abdication of the Tsar in favour of Michael, no one was especially stirred. It seemed that greater wonders were to be expected in these days. . . .

The stars shimmered in the transparent depths of the sky, above the uneven lines of roofs and the orange sun-

set. The bare, black branches of the limes were distinct and motionless. Below them it was quite dark. The frozen puddles on the pavements crunched beneath the feet. Dasha stopped, and not letting go of Ivan Ilyitch's arm, which she held with both hands, she peered through the low palings at the candles being lighted in the deep little window of the old church, Nicolas on Hen's Feet.

The little church and churchyard were in the shadow of the limes. A door banged and shuffling his felt boots came a small man in a long coat reaching to his heels and a mushroom hat. He was heard rattling his keys and then he began to mount the stairs to the belfry.

"The sacristan has gone to ring the bell," Dasha whispered, raising her head. The light of the setting sun was reflected on the belfry and the light of the stars shone on the ball on top.

Boom! the bell rang out. Thus for three hundred years had it summoned the inhabitants for the repose of the soul before the coming sleep. Dasha made the sign of the cross. For a moment there rose in Ivan Ilyitch's mind a picture of a chapel on the threshold of which sat a woman in a white coat with a dead baby in her lap. He pressed Dasha's arm with his elbow. Dasha looked at him, questioning. Her mouth grew serious.

"Would you like to?" she whispered hastily. "Here? Now?"

Ivan Ilyitch gave a broad smile. Dasha frowned, stamped her foot and turned away.

"Dasha, you are not angry with me?"

"I am."

"But who would marry us now?"

"It doesn't matter. I know I talked nonsense, but you shouldn't have smiled. . . . There is nothing funny in it.

When you are walking arm in arm with a man you love above everything in the world and you see a light in a church, it is quite natural to want to go in and be married." . . .

Dasha reflected and again took Ivan Ilyitch's arm. "You know, we must be married here at the Hen's Feet."

"Of course, I do."

"All right, then, I won't be angry."

"Dasha, don't you think we've got rather idiotic?"

"Yes, Ivan; isn't it terrible!"

XXXVIII

"Citizens, soldiers of the free Russian army, I have the honour to congratulate you on this joyous holiday. The chains of our bondage are broken. In three days, without spilling a single drop of blood, the Russian people have accomplished the greatest revolution in history. Bloody Tsar Nicholas has abdicated the throne, his ministers are arrested and the heir to the throne, Michael, has refused the burdensome crown. Complete power has now been given to the people. At the head of the state is the Provisional Government, which has been entrusted with the task of electing an All-Russian Constituent Assembly on the basis of a universal, equal and secret vote. . . . Now . . . hail to the Russian Revolution! Hail to the Constituent Assembly! Hail to the Provisional Government." . . .

"Hurra-a-a-h!" came a prolonged roar of thousands of soldiers' voices. Nikolai Ivanovitch Smokovnikov took a large drab handkerchief from the pocket of his leather coat and wiped his neck, face and beard. He was speaking from a wooden platform, reached by a layer of sleepers. Behind him stood the regiment commander, Tetkin, who had recently been promoted to the rank of colonel. His weather-beaten face, with the short beard and thick nose, wore an expression of keen attention. At the shout of hurrah, he saluted nervously. Before the platform, on a flat field, covered with dirty thawing snow, stood some two thousand soldiers without arms, in iron helmets and loose coats. They were listening open-mouthed to the

strange words that the gentleman, as red as a turkey, was saying to them. In the grey mist in the distance were the burnt chimneys of a village, and beyond it were the German lines. Several ragged crows flew across the desolate, dead place.

"Soldiers!" Nikolai Ivanovitch continued, stretching out his hand with outspread fingers, the blood rushing to his neck, "yesterday you were still the lower rank, the speechless herd whom the Tsar's Staff sent to the slaughter. . . . You were not told why you had to die. . . . You were lashed for a fault and shot without trial." (Colonel Tetkin coughed and shifted from one foot to the other. He remained silent, however, and bent his head attentively.) "The Provisional Government has appointed me Commissary of the army on the western front" (Nikolai Ivanovitch clenched his fist), "and I have to tell you that from now on there are no lower ranks. The term has been abolished. You are now soldiers, equal citizens of the Russian State. There is no difference between soldiers and army commanders. The titles, Your Honour, Your Excellency, Your Highness, have been abolished. From now on you are to say, 'Good day, Mr. General,' or 'No, Mr. General,' or 'Yes, Mr. General.' The humiliating replies of 'Yes, Your Excellency,' 'No, Your Excellency,' are abolished. A soldier need no longer salute an officer of any rank. He can shake hands with a general if he wants to." . . .

"Ha! ha! ha!" the crowd laughed cheerfully. Colonel Tetkin smiled and blinked his frightened little eyes.

"And last and foremost, soldiers, so far, the war has been carried on by the Tsar's government, now it is being waged by the people, by you. The Provisional Government therefore proposes that you should elect soldiers'

committees in the armies, company committees, battalion committees, regiment and army committees. These freely elected committees will conduct the affairs of the army, beginning with the commissariat down to equal participation in the preparation of military plans. You must send to the committees men whom you trust! From now on the soldier's finger will trace the war map by the side of the supreme commander-in-chief's pencil. . . . Soldiers, I congratulate you on the great conquest of the revolution." . . .

Shouts of hurrah again rang throughout the field. Tetkin stood erect, saluting. His face was grey and his eyes in abject horror were fixed on Nikolai Ivanovitch. Murmurs arose in the crowd.

"How soon are we to make peace with the Germans?"

"What's the soap ration per man?"

"Mr. Commissary, will the committees try men for stealing, or will they be tried by a court?"

"I've got a complaint to make, Mr.——"

"What about our leave? I've got a weak stomach." . . .

"We've been rotting in the trenches for three months. We're worn out." . . .

"Mr. Commissary, what is going on at home? Will they elect a king in Petersburg?"

In order to reply more adequately, Nikolai Ivanovitch came down from the platform and was instantly surrounded by the excited, evil-smelling men. Colonel Tetkin leant on the platform rail and watched the shaven head and fat neck of the military commissar moving among the mass of helmets.

A red-haired, spiteful man with a coat thrown loosely on his shoulders (Tetkin knew the man well; he was a rowdy, quarrelsome fellow from the telephone company),

seized Nikolai Ivanovitch by the belt of his coat and, casting a glance around, cried:

"Mr. Commissar, you spoke pleasant words to us and we listened to you pleasantly. . . . Now you must answer my question. . . . You've got to answer whether you can or not." . . .

The men cheered and pressed closer. Colonel Tetkin frowned and got down from the platform anxiously.

"I'm going to put a question to you," the soldier went on, his black finger-nail almost touching Nikolai Ivanovitch's nose; "I got a letter from my village telling me that my cow has died. I never had a horse, and my wife and children have gone about the country begging. . . . Now, have you a right to shoot me if I desert? Tell me!"

"If your own well-being is more dear to you than freedom betray it, betray it, like Judas, and Russia will afterwards cast it in your teeth that you are not worthy to be a soldier of the revolutionary army! Go home!" Nikolai Ivanovitch shouted.

"Don't you shout at me!"

"Who are you to shout at us?"

"Soldiers!" Nikolai Ivanovitch stood on tiptoe. "There is some confusion. The first creed of the Revolution is faith in our allies. The free revolutionary army of Russia must throw itself with renewed force on the enemy of freedom, imperialistic Germany."

"Have you ever made food for lice in the trenches, eh?" a brutal voice asked.

"He's never seen lice in his life." . . .

"Give him a couple to breed from." . . .

"We don't want you to tell us about freedom, we want you to tell us about the war. We've been fighting for three years. It's well enough for you fattening your

stomach at home, but we want to know when the war is going to end." . . .

"Soldiers!" Nikolai Ivanovitch cried once more. "The banner of the revolution has been raised; freedom and war to complete victory!"

"You can't make out the damned fool!"

"And where is this victory? We've been fighting for three years and haven't seen any victories." . . .

"What was the use of your getting rid of the Tsar then?"

"They got rid of him on purpose; he prevented them from dragging on the war." . . .

"Why do you stand staring at him, comrades? He's been bribed." . . .

"You can see he's an agent." . . .

Colonel Tetkin elbowed his way through the men and saw a big, lowering, dirty artilleryman clutch Nikolai Ivanovitch by the chest and shake him, yelling: "What made you come here? Now then, what made you come here?" . . .

The back of Nikolai Ivanovitch's round head receded into his neck, his upraised beard, drawn on the cheeks, as it were, shook. In pushing the man away, Nikolai Ivanovitch's trembling fingers tore the collar of his coat. The man scowled, snatched off his iron helmet and struck Nikolai Ivanovitch several times over the head and face. . . .

XXXIX

At the entrance to a large jeweller's shop, Muraveichik & Co., there sat a night-watchman in a big coat and a militiaman, a quiet little peasant in a soldier's tunic and with a piece of red ribbon sewn to the band of his cap. The sloping street was deserted; the mirrored windows of offices and shops were dark and shuttered. A scrap of crumpled paper was blown with a rustling sound along the street. A cold March wind whistled through the bare acacia trees and their black tangled branches shook above the paving stones. The moon shone as in the south, bright and clear, and hung like a Medusa above the town. The watchman in the big coat was talking in a whisper. "He dashed out of his study and said, 'I shan't believe it until I see the telegram.' . . . And then the civil-servants showed him the telegram about the abdication of His Majesty, the Emperor, and when the Governor read it he burst into tears." . . .

"Aye, aye," said the militiaman.

"And in three days he was dismissed."

"Why?"

"Because he was a governor and they've abolished governors now."

"Is that so?"

"They've proclaimed freedom and every one can govern himself now."

"It's like taking the law into your own hands, eh?"

"Well, the other day I paid a visit to the kitchen of the Governor's palace. The porter there, Stepan, is a rela-

tion of mine. He'd put away his medals and galloon in a trunk and was wearing a shabby little cap. 'This is what we've come to,' he says, when he sees me. 'In my old age I've got to open the door to people that would have made me call a policeman to take them to the police station before.' "

"Aye, aye," said the militiaman.

"And he told me why the Tsar abdicated. . . . The Tsar was in Mogulev at the time and they suddenly spoke to him by direct telegram, saying this and that, that the people in Petersburg had rebelled, that the soldiers would not go against the people, and that they wanted to go back to their own homes. 'Well,' thought the Tsar, 'this is only half a misfortune.' And he summoned his generals and said to them: 'The people in Petersburg have rebelled, my kingdom is in danger. What shall I do? Give me your advice.' And he looked at the generals. And the generals wouldn't give their advice and turned away like wolves in the forest." . . .

"What a calamity!"

"There was only one who did not turn away. He was a drunken little old general. 'Your Majesty,' he says, 'command me and I'm ready to lie down and die for you.' The Emperor shook his head. Of all his faithful servants only one had remained true to him and he was always drunk from morning to night. 'What must be, must be. One man in the field is no army.' "

A tall man walked past the entrance in the moonlight. The upper part of his face was hidden in the shadow of his cap. The left sleeve of his grey coat was empty and thrust into the pocket. He turned his face towards the two men and his teeth gleamed white. He passed on and his long footprints were left on the wet pavement.

"This is the fourth time that man has been past here," the watchman remarked.

In the distance a church clock struck two and a couple of cocks began to crow across the river, in the open fields.

The watchman got a box of matches, struck one and, sucking violently at his pipe, lighted it and spat some two or three paces away.

"I wonder where all these rascals come from." he said. "As soon as they proclaimed freedom, no less than five thousand of them came into town. The porter from Luxe said to me: 'In our hotel there are at least thirty burglars and they've taken the best rooms. They don't go in for small things; robbing banks is their job.'" . . . The militiaman sighed sympathetically and asked for a light. The man with one arm again appeared in the street. He was coming straight towards the watchman. They stared at him in silence. Suddenly the watchman whispered hurriedly:

"It's a bad lookout for us, Ivan. Give me the whistle."

The militiaman reached out for the whistle, but the man with one arm sprang at him with a single bound and knocked him in the chest with his foot. The militiaman rolled to the pavement. The watchman said quietly in a trembling voice:

"Not so rough, Your Honour; we are only servants."

"Shut up!" said the man with one arm. At this moment a long motor-car glided round the corner and six men sprang out of it, dressed in Hungarian tunics. Two of them stood on guard in the street, two others knocked down the watchman and militiaman without a word and twisted their arms behind them. Two others were rattling a key at the door.

"Quieter, you dogs!" whispered the man with one arm.

The door opened softly and the one-armed man and two other burglars entered the shop. The whole business was done without any noise. A belated passer-by came along the other side of the street and, seeing a robbery going on, he tore away without a sound. In a little while the man with one arm and his two comrades came out of the shop carrying a black velvet bundle.

"And what about them?" asked one of the robbers who had been guarding the bound watchman, turning to the man with one arm.

"Liquidate."

One of the robbers took a pistol out of his pocket of his Hungarian tunic, admired the way it shone in the moonlight and went up to the prostrate watchmen. Two shots rang through the street. The car dashed away at full speed in the shadow of the acacias and disappeared round a corner.

Elisaveta Kievna was walking up and down her room in the Hotel Luxe, smoking and listening and stopping now and then by the window. Over her thin chemise and lace petticoat she had thrown a costly coat. Dresses and underclothing were strewn about the room and the bed was not made.

When she heard the sound of a motor-car, Elisaveta Kievna put her head out of the window, but she could not see anything. The wind sang through the telegraph wires and chilled her body through the coat. She shut the window with a bang and once more paced the room. smoking. Her face twitched. Some time passed and two shots were suddenly heard in the distance. Elisaveta Kievna dropped her cigarette and stood smiling in a help-

less, pitiful way. No more shots followed. Her face relaxed; the tension had passed. She raised her hands to her unkempt head, pressed it and lay down on her side on the bed. She did not stay there long, however. She soon jumped up and sat down on the sofa by the table, covered with a stained heavy tablecloth. First with her fingers and then with her teeth, she drew the cork from a bottle. She smiled and smoked and drank brandy from a tall wine glass with a corner of her mouth.

Suddenly she shuddered so violently as to make the glasses on the table shake. There was a scratching on the door. She quickly jumped from the sofa and turned the key. In came Alexander Ivanovitch Jirov in a velveteen jacket and a big soft tie. His elongated head was shaven and his face was so pale as to be almost green. His wet lips smiled, exposing a rotten tooth at the side. Elisaveta Kievna returned to the sofa and sat down, curling her feet under her. She covered her bare shoulders and chest with the collar of her coat.

"Have some brandy," she said. Jirov sat down opposite her and filled a glass. His sunken eyes, black and lustreless, were fixed on Elisaveta Kievna's face.

"What do you think of it? Arkadi has killed two men," he whispered. Elisaveta Kievna swallowed a lump in her throat and raised her brows. "I have just come from the place, Lisa. There is ever such a row and crowd at the shop. Muraveichik is in his pants, tearing his beard. The two watchmen have been killed, both struck at the back of the head." Jirov's lips trembled. Elisaveta pushed a glass towards him on the table. He filled it to overflowing, wetting his finger, and with a broad smile, he wiped it behind his ear. Elisaveta Kievna drained the glass. "Don't you think it's funny, Lisa? We had such

a jolly dinner today and talked and were excited and read poetry and you were pleased and pretty and Arkadi was nice, and then, there are these two watchmen lying like sacks, with a black pool at the head of each. . . . It took my nerve away, somehow. Don't you feel it?" He took from his jacket pocket a silver box set with jewels, carefully opened the lid, took a pinch of some white powder and sniffed it. His eyes grew watery. "I often see a picture of a big, empty town. . . . I am wandering through the streets; grass is growing between the paving stones. . . . Windows are bare. There is a wonderful sunset in the distance. I see this town in moments of melancholy. Only a solitary woman's form in a street in the very heart. . . . And the woman is always you, Lisa." . . . He leaned back his chair and sent a cloud of smoke to the crystal chandelier. "Of course, murder is the highest manifestation of will. It is essential that murder should be followed by ecstasy, the joy of self-assertion. . . . If you only knew the kind of ideas that come to me, Lisa. . . . But to kill watchmen and keep awake all night and shudder with disgust, augh! Arkadi is clever and bold, but he is a thief all the same, who kills from round the corner." . . .

"I'll chuck you out of the room!" Elisaveta Kievna exclaimed. "Don't you dare say that!" She threw back her coat and half-naked as she was she leaned her elbows on the table and supported her cheeks on both the palms of her hands. "You are mere dirt; a crawling worm; I despise you." . . .

Jirov half closed his eyes with the enjoyment of it and drew his chair nearer to hers. "I am very fond of Arkadi, and think a lot of him," he said in a throaty voice. "I am much indebted to him. . . . But he's only practical. He has lost the guiding thread. . . . Do you

remember our talks at the 'Château Caberné'? He had pathos then. And now, in three months, twelve shops robbed and thirty men killed. He will end by going to Helsingfors and starting a bank." . . .

"Scoundrel, scoundrel," Elisaveta Kievna said quietly, her face still resting on her hands. "He lives on our money, sniffs cocaine all day and is not satisfied." . . .

"No, it doesn't satisfy me," Jirow said brutally, and taking a ring with a sparkling stone from his little finger, he threw it into the coals. "You forget who I am!" He thrust away his chair and walked to the door.

"Don't go, Sasha," Elisaveta Kievna said in a soft, almost pleading voice.

He hesitated and came back and drank some brandy. He took a sniff from his little box and pulled back the blind from the window. "It is getting light," he said. Elisaveta Kievna shook her head. "Now hear me carefully," Jirov said. "Arkadi must get us millions of money. The three of us will form a centre which we will call the Central Committee of the Planetary Revolution. Socialism may go to the devil. He won't have anything to do with it. We are pure anarchist-planetarians." . . . Elisaveta Kievna lifted her head and looked at Jirov. Her short-sighted eyes sparkled. He continued, his elongated shaven head glistening beneath the crystal chandelier. "We must immediately establish a net of agents in all the cities of the world. You can give great help in this, Lisa. There is no one like you for finding people with an unquenchable thirst for crime. . . . We will begin by blowing up parliaments, palaces, arsenals. . . . Panic will follow and robberies and murders. . . . We will blow up stations and railway bridges and harbours. . . . There will be chaos and self-destruction. . . .

Then we will rule over the remaining part of humanity. . . . We will then come to the primary thing. We'll drive millions of people to the equator and dig a big mine, many miles deep, and line it with steel and then we'll fill it with dynamite and explode it. I am not raving; it is quite a possible thing to do; I have discussed it with engineers. . . . The earth will be thrown from its orbit and like a rocket will shoot away from the damned mathematical curve and dash into the wilderness of space. . . . The cosmos will be shattered to pieces. The planets and stars will come out of their orbits. . . . There will be thunder in the heavens; worlds will crack like nuts. That will be a moment of divine ecstasy. . . . We will then fly to some sun and be consumed. . . . That is something to live for, Lisa. . . ."

"I can't stand it any more!" Elisaveta Kievna exclaimed, getting up from the sofa and groping about the room like one blind. "Don't you all see that I am going mad? Talks like this from morning to night. . . . Robberies, murder, blood. . . . I don't want to destroy anything. . . ." She cracked her fingers and placed them on her throat. "Sasha, you must dissuade Arkadi. We've got lots of money. Let us go away somewhere, the three of us. . . . If only for one year. I can't stand these sleepless nights and the shooting. I was brushing Arkadi's clothes the other day, you know, the ones he wore in Kiev, and I saw a blood-stain on the coat. . . . If we could only go away to some island, three thousand versts from land and lie on the sand. . . . But no, we shall drag ourselves about from town to town and rob and deceive each other until we are hanged, for which God be thanked. Go away, Sasha, I want to sleep. . . . Arkadi will be back late. . . . Go. I'll spit in your face if you don't. . . ."

XL

Katia remained alone. Teliegin and Dasha were married in the church of Nicolas on Hen's Feet and went away to Petrograd that same day. Katia saw them off at the station, made the sign of the cross over them both and kissed them at parting, but they were both absent and dazed. Katia returned home at dusk.

The house was empty. Marfusha and Liza had gone to a meeting for domestic servants "to pass a resolution of protest." In the dining-room there was still a smell of flowers and cigarettes. In the middle of the table, among the dishes which had not been cleared away, there stood a flowering cherry tree in a pot. Katia watered it with the water in the water-jug, then she cleared the table and shook the crumbs from the table-cloth. She did not turn on the light, but sat down by the table facing the window. The cloudy sky without was getting dark; the roofs were barely visible. A clock in the room struck the hour; it would have struck in the same way had the heart been breathing with despair. Katia sat for a long time motionless, then she passed her hand over her eyes and got up. She took her down shawl from a chair and wrapping it round her shoulders, went into Dasha's room. In the dim light she could see the striped mattress on the bare bed and an empty hat-box on the table. Bits of paper and stuff were strewn about the floor. When Katia saw that Dasha had taken all her little things without forgetting anything at all, she was horribly hurt. She sat down on the bed on the striped mattress and remained motionless as she had done in the dining-room.

The dining-room clock struck ten with loud strokes. Katia rearranged the shawl on her shoulders and went into the kitchen. She stood there, listening, then on tip-toe, she reached down from a shelf the kitchen note-book, tore off a clean slip of paper and wrote in pencil. "Liza and Marfusha, you ought to be ashamed to desert the house all day and to stay away so late." The tears fell on the slip of paper. Katia put the note on the kitchen-table and went into her bedroom. She undressed quickly and got into bed, pulling her stockings off under the bedclothes, then she lay down, huddled her knees and grew calmer.

At midnight the kitchen door banged. Liza and Marfusha stamped in, talking loudly. They went into the kitchen, were quiet for a moment and then both burst out laughing. They had read the note. Katia blinked, but did not move. After a while it grew quiet in the kitchen.

The sleepless clock struck one loudly. Katia turned on her back. She kicked off the bedclothes, sighed several times with difficulty as though she wanted air and jumped out of bed. She turned on the electric light and walked over to a large standing mirror. Her thin chemise did not reach her knees. Katia anxiously and hurriedly examined herself as she would examine some one whom she knew well. Her chin trembled. She moved her face nearer to the glass and raised her hair on the right temple. "Of course, there are. Here are some more. . . ." She examined every part of her face. "Of course, I shall be grey in a year and then old." She turned out the light and got back into bed, covering her eyes with her elbow. "In all my life not a moment of joy. Everything is finished now. No one will ever put his arms about me and press me close, and say: 'My dear, my darling, my sweetheart, my love'! . . ."

During these bitter reflections and regrets Katia suddenly recalled a wet gravel path in a meadow, dark blue from the rain and the big lime-trees. . . . Katia herself was walking down the path, in a brown dress and black apron. The gravel crunched beneath her shoes. Katia could feel how lissome she was and slender and sweet and the wind was blowing her hair. Beside her, not on the path but on the wet grass, walked Alesha, a schoolboy, wheeling a bicycle. Katia turns away so as not to laugh at him. Alesha is saying in a choking voice: "I know there is no hope of your returning my love. I only came to tell you, Katia, that I used once to want to go to the university to serve the people and education, now I laugh at these dreams. . . . It is all one and the same to me. I will end my life in some railway-station in the depths of the country. Good-bye." He gets on his bicycle and rides away down the meadow, leaving a dark blue track behind him on the grass. His bent back in his grey jacket and his white cap are hidden by the greenery. Katia cries: "Alesha, come back! I'll change my mind perhaps and marry you!" She cannot say more, for she is laughing and shaking her head. . . .

Had she really stood on that path with the summer wind which smelt of the rain blowing her apron about? Katia sat up in bed. She clutched her head and leaned her elbows on her bare knees. In her mind there rose the lights of lanterns, snowflakes, the wind howling through the bare trees, the whining, hopeless creaking of a sleigh, Bezsonov's icy, feminine eyes near her own. . . . Pleasure, weakness, apathy. . . . The horrible thrill of curiosity . . . God! Whom had she allowed to come near her then?

Again Katia lay down. The stillness of the house

was broken by a sharp ring at the bell. Katia turned cold. The ring was repeated. Liza, breathing angrily in her broken sleep, shuffled barefoot along the passage; the chain rattled at the front door and in a minute there was a knock at her bedroom door. "Madam, there is a telegram for you."

Katia's brows contracted. She tore open the narrow envelope, unfolded the paper and darkness stood before her eyes.

"Liza," she said, looking at the girl, whose lips trembled with fright, "Nikolai Ivanovitch is dead."

Liza gave a cry and burst into tears. "Go," Katia said to her. For a second time she read the horrible letters on the telegraph ribbon: "Nikolai Ivanovitch died from bad wounds received in gallant performance of his duty. The body will be brought to Moscow at the expense of the Union."

Katia felt sick, the saliva rushed to her mouth, darkness swam at the corners of her eyes; she stretched herself on the pillows and lost consciousness.

The next day Prince Kapustin-Unjesky called on Katia. He was a well-known public man of liberal views, the same ruddy-cheeked aristocrat who had spoken at the Law Club on the first day of the revolution. He took both her hands in his and pressed them against his rough waistcoat. He told her that he had come on behalf of the organization on which he had worked with the late Nikolai Ivanovitch and on behalf of the town of Moscow of which he was now assistant commissary, also on behalf of the revo-

lution, to offer her his heartfelt sympathy at the untimely death of her husband, who was such a gallant fighter for principle.

Prince Kapustin-Unjesky was so naturally happy, healthy and cheerful, he seemed so frankly grieved, such a comfortable smell of cigars clung about his waistcoat that Katia felt relieved for a moment. She raised her sleepless, glistening eyes, parted her dry lips and said:

"Thank you for what you say about Nikolai Ivanovitch."

The Prince took out a big handkerchief and wiped his eyes. He had fulfilled a difficult duty and went away, his car roaring like a monster in the street. And Katia again began to wander about the room. She stopped by the photograph of the unknown general with the lion's face; she took up an album, then a book, then a little box which had a heron painted on the lid with a frog in its mouth, and again she wandered about, examining the wall-paper, the blinds. "God! How tiresome it is to walk about, to look at things, to touch them!" she thought. She did not so much as taste her dinner; the very idea of food was revolting to her. She commenced a short note to Dasha, but tore it up. Dasha could not be bothered with letters now. . . . She stared out of the window at the dim, white sky and whispered some curious lines, which for some unaccountable reason had come into her mind. "Homeless hands were pressed against my breast and dim eyes looked at me askance."

To lie down, to sleep. But going to bed was like going into her coffin; it was awful to contemplate after last night. . . . Hardest of all was her desperate pity

for Nikolai Ivanovitch. He was such a good, kind man, so practical. . . . She ought to have loved him as he was, but she did not love him, she tormented him. . . . Oh, God, oh, God! That was why he had gone grey so early. . . . Even his smile was kind and helpless. . . .

The following day there was a requiem mass and twenty-four hours later the burial of what remained of Nikolai Ivanovitch. Beautiful speeches were made at the grave. The dead man was compared to an albatross perishing in an abyss, to a man who had brought a lighted torch into a forest filled with wild beasts. . . . A well-known party politician arrived late at the funeral. He was a little man in spectacles, who looked like a reflection in a concave mirror at a wax-works show. "Now, Citizen, make way," he said roughly to Katia, and pushed his way to the edge of the grave. In his speech he said that Nikolai Ivanovitch's death once again proved the justice of the agrarian policy pursued by his (the orator's) party. The earth beneath his shabby boots crumbled and fell with a dull thud on the coffin. Katia felt a sickening spasm in her throat. Unperceived she got away from the crowd and went home. Her only desire was to wash and to sleep. When she entered the house, however, a feeling of terror came over her. There were the striped wall-papers, the photographs, the little box with the heron, the crumpled table-cloth in the dining-room, the coffin draperies, the dirty windows. How awful and desolate! Katia ordered the bath to be turned on and she got into the warm water with a groan. Every part of her body was mortally tired.

She could scarcely crawl to her own room and fell asleep without getting inside the bedclothes. In her sleep she could hear a bell ringing and the sound of footsteps and some one knocking at her door, but she made no reply.

It was quite dark when Katia awoke. Her heart ached horribly. "What was it? What was it?" she asked in a scared, pitiful way. She sat up in bed, hoping for a moment that the terrible thing had happened in a dream. . . . For a moment, too, she felt a sense of injury and injustice. "Why did they not leave her in peace?" When quite awake she tidied her hair, slipped her bare feet into her slippers, thinking, clearly and calmly, "I can't stand it any more."

Leisurely Katia took a lacquered box from a drawer. It was a travelling medicine chest and she examined the labels on the phials. She opened a little bottle of morphia and sniffed it and stood it aside and put the other bottles back in the box and the box in its place in the drawer. She went into the dining-room to fetch a wine glass, but noticed a light in the drawing-room door and stopped. "Is that you, Liza?" she asked, opening the door. On the sofa sat a tall man in a military tunic; his shaven head was bound with a piece of black stuff. He got up quickly. Katia's knees shook; she turned cold; there was a hollow feeling beneath the heart. The man looked at her with his bright eyes, wide open and alarmed. His straight lips were compressed; the muscles stood out on his cheek-bones. It was Roshchin, Vadim Petrovitch. Katia put her hands on her breast. Roshchin did not take his eyes off her and said slowly and resolutely:

"I called to pay my respects to you, but your servant

told me of the misfortune that has happened. I stayed because I had to tell you that you can command me even to death."

His voice trembled when he uttered the last words and his strong face flushed a brown red. Katia pressed her hands against her breast with all her force. Roshchin could see by her eyes that he must help her. When he drew near, Katia said, her teeth chattering, "Good evening, Vadim Petrovitch. . . ."

Involuntarily he put out his arms to catch her; she seemed so frail and unhappy, a thing barely animate, but he instantly dropped them and frowned. His eyes grew moist. With her keen woman's sense, Katia knew that he pitied her with that unique love, that wonderful light of life which had come long ago from the pierced hands outspread above the world. . . . Katia suddenly felt that, miserable and small and wicked and incapable as she was, with all her unshed tears and her miserable phial of morphia, she had become necessary and dear to the man, who was silently and solemnly waiting to take her to his heart. Restraining her tears, but not able to speak a word, Katia seized his hand and pressed her lips and face against it.

XLI

"Look at that island and the cliffs and the bay! Isn't the green water bottomless? Look at those birds flying above the bay; they look like people with wings." . . .

Dasha was resting her elbows on the window-sill and looking out of the window. Beyond the dark woods at the end of Kamennoostrovsky half the sky was ablaze with the setting sun. Miracles were happening in the heavens. Behind Dasha sat Ivan Ilyitch. He was looking at her, motionless, though he could have moved as much as he pleased. Dasha would anyhow not have vanished from the room with the dark blue curtains and the red reflection of the sunset on the wall above the embroidered cushions on the sofa.

"Heavens, isn't it sad and beautiful!" Dasha exclaimed. "It is nice to be with you. . . . We seem to be floating in an airship. . . . Oh, Ivan, I promise to be economical in the housekeeping, but we must get a piano!"

Ivan Ilyitch nodded in silent despair. He had bought all manner of kitchen pails, but had forgotten the most important thing, a piano. His attention, however, was immediately distracted by Dasha, who took her hands from the window-sill, threw herself in a chair and pulled down her skirt.

"It is a long time since I played!" she said; "not since the war began. . . . Just think, the war is still going on, while we—— Well, you see what we are doing."

Dasha spoke the last words softly. She soon continued.

"When the war is over, you and I must take up music

seriously. And there is another thing, Ivan, I should like to live by the sea. Do you remember how we lay on the sand and the sea came up to us? What a pale blue sea it was, do you remember? I seem to have loved you all my life, Ivan." Ivan Ilyitch fidgeted again; he wanted to say something, but Dasha cried out, "The kettle must be boiling!" and ran away. She stopped in the doorway and looked around. In the dim light, Ivan Ilyitch could only make out her face, her hand on the curtain and an ankle in a grey stocking. Dasha vanished. Ivan Ilyitch caught his breath. He put his hands behind his head and shut his eyes.

Dasha and Teliegin had arrived at two o'clock that very day. They had spent the whole of the night in the corridor of a crowded carriage sitting on their trunks. As soon as they arrived home, Dasha began to unpack. She peered into every corner, dusted, admired the flat, decided to turn the drawing-room into the dining-room and Ivan Ilyitch's room into the drawing-room and the dining-room into Ivan Ilyitch's room, whereas for her own room, she decided to move some of the drawing-room furniture and to put in the drawing-room some of the furniture from Ivan Ilyitch's room. And it all had to be done immediately. The porter was summoned from below and with Ivan Ilyitch's help, he moved cupboards and sofas from room to room. When the rearrangement was completed and the porter had departed, leaving a smell of Lenten pie behind him, Dasha asked Ivan Ilyitch to open all the windows, while she herself went to wash. She splashed about in the water for a long time, did something to her face and hair, would not allow Ivan Ilyitch to come first into one room, then into another,

while his only desire was to be with Dasha every moment of the day and to look at her. At dusk Dasha felt more settled. Ivan Ilyitch washed and shaved and carefully dressed, went into the drawing-room and sat down near her. For the first time since they had become man and wife in the church of Nicolas on Hen's Feet they were alone in the stillness. Dasha seemed to fear the stillness and did her best not to keep silent. She confessed afterwards to Ivan Ilyitch that she was afraid that he would suddenly say in a "rough" voice, not like his own, "Well, Dasha?" And Ivan Ilyitch was grieved that Dasha was so on her guard.

Dasha had gone out to see to the kettle and Ivan Ilyitch sat with eyes closed. Every part of him seemed to feel Dasha's presence and the charm of it. No matter what his mind rested on, the thing, as totally unimportant, was banished, and with renewed force he felt that a being with a gentle voice and sweet face had settled in his house, a slender, lissome creature in a pretty, blue dress, his own wife. Ivan Ilyitch opened his eyes and listened to Dasha's heels clattering about in the kitchen. Suddenly there was a crash, something broke, Dasha's voice exclaimed plaintively, "A cup!" And instantly warm happiness filled Ivan Ilyitch's heart. "When I wake tomorrow, it will not be an ordinary morning; Dasha will be there." . . . He got up to tell Dasha of his discovery, but she appeared in the doorway. "I have broken a cup . . . Ivan, do you really want some tea?"

"No, I don't."

"I don't want any either. . . . Why did I boil the kettle?"

She walked up to Ivan Ilyitch and as it was quite dark, she placed her hands on his shoulder.

"What were you thinking of while I was gone?" she asked softly.

"Of you."

"I knew it was of me. . . . What were you thinking of me?"

Dasha's uplifted face in the dusk seemed to be frowning, but it was smiling really. Her breast rose and fell evenly. Ivan Ilyitch found it hard to collect his thoughts. He puckered his brows honestly. "I was thinking of how disconnected it all was, you and that you were my wife. I realized it suddenly and wanted to come and tell you, but I forgot to."

"As for me, I find it quite connected," Dasha said.

"How?"

"By my affection for you. I seemed to have wandered and wandered to come close to you like this. . . . And there is confidence besides. . . . Why do you find it disconnected? Do you imagine that I think of anything that you do not know?"

"I see!" said Ivan Ilyitch joyfully. "It is so simple. . . . However, I don't know what you do think about." . . .

"Dear, dear!" Dasha went over to the window. "Sit down here. I'll sit at the side." Ivan Ilyitch sat down on a chair and Dasha sat on the arm of it. "Ivan, dear, I have no secret thought; that is why I feel so at home with you, that is why I love you so."

"When you were in the kitchen," Ivan Ilyitch said, "I was thinking that a wonderful being had settled in my house. Was that wrong?"

"It was," Dasha said pensively. "It was very wrong. I am your wife and a being is some strange person."

"Do you love me, Dasha?"

"Oh!" Dasha threw up her head. "I shall love you to the very birch tree."

"What birch tree?"

"Don't you know? At the end of every person's life is a little mound and above it a drooping birch tree."

Ivan Ilyitch put his arms round Dasha's shoulders. Gently she allowed him to draw her to himself. And just as long ago at the sea, their kiss was a long one; they had to stop for breath.

"Oh, Ivan!" Dasha said, and put her arms around his neck. His heart beat so violently that she pitied him. She sighed and getting up, said gently and simply:

"Come, Ivan."

Five days after her arrival, Dasha received a letter from her sister, informing her of Ivan Nikolai Ivanovitch's death. Katia wrote: "I have been through a period of misery and despair. I realized clearly that I was forever alone. It was terrible! Every law, human and divine, is broken when one is alone. In my grief and despair my soul was consumed as in a fire. I wanted to escape from these torments—an icy, invisible hand propelled me to that course. I was saved by a miracle, the glance of a man's eyes. Oh, Dasha, Dasha, we live through long years for a moment perhaps, to look into a man's eyes, into the depths of love. . . . Dead ghosts as we are, we drink this water of life, our blind eyes are opened, we see God's light, we hear the voices of love. Love, love . . . I bless the man who taught me the words." The news of her

brother-in-law's death and Katia's distracted letter were a great shock to Dasha. She immediately prepared to go to Moscow, but a second letter arrived from Katia the next day. She wrote to say that she was packing to come to Petrograd and asked Dasha to find her a cheap room. In a postscript she said: "Vadim Petrovitch is going to call on you. He will tell you everything about me. He is like a brother and father to me; he is the best friend of my life."

Dasha and Teliegin were walking slowly down the avenue. It was a Sunday in April. Above the transparent green tracery of leaves, in the cool blue spring sky, fragments of fleecy clouds flew, broken by the wind and dissolved by the sun. The sunlight penetrated to the avenue as through water and crept in round shadows on the gravel, on Dasha's white dress, on Teliegin's green army shirt. Moss-clad trunks of limes and the dry ruddy poles of firs came towards them, with their murmuring tops and their rustling leaves. Dasha listened to a thrush calling in the distance; it sang in a watery voice on two notes. Dasha looked at Ivan Ilyitch. He had taken off his cap and was squinting with a smile. She had a sense of peace and completion. She felt the charm of the day, the joy of breathing, the lightness with which she walked, so in tune was she to the day, to the man she loved, who walked beside her.

"Ivan," Dasha said, turning to him with a smile.

"Yes, Dasha?" he asked, smiling, too.

"Never mind . . . I've changed my mind."

"What about?"

"I will tell you later."

"I know what it is."

Dasha's forehead puckered in alarm; her lips parted. "I am sure you don't." . . .

They came to a tall pine. Ivan Ilyitch brushed away the pieces of peeled bark, covered with soft drops of resin. He broke them in his fingers and looked at Dasha affectionately from beneath his brows.

"There is only one blessing on earth for our love, Dashenka, and . . ."

Dasha's hand trembled. "You see," she whsipered, "I feel as if I were coming into some greater happiness . . . so much do I love, so full am I." . . .

Ivan Ilyitch shook his head in silence. They came out on a meadow covered with fresh green grass and yellow buttercups swaying in the wind. The wind, which drove the fragments of scattered clouds along the sky, caught Dasha's dress. As she walked, she bent down now and then to pull down her skirt, saying, "Heavens, what a wind!"

When they crossed the meadow, from the shade of a tree, where several soldiers were lying, one man rose up, hatless, with torn collar and loose shirt. He came towards them in his heavy boots in a staggering, impudent gait.

"Stop!" he cried, waving a limp hand before his face, as though to drive away a fly.

Ivan Ilyitch stopped; his chin protruded, a vein stood out on his forehead. Dasha clutched his arm and whispered: "Please don't spoil my day! Don't take any notice of him; he is drunk!"

"What do you want?" Ivan Ilyitch asked calmly and coolly. The man stood still. His whitish, drunken eyes were fixed on Teliegin.

"Taking the air, officer?" he asked with less assurance. Dasha dug her finger-nails below Ivan Ilyitch's elbow. He gave a smile with the corner of his mouth to let her see that he understood. "What do you want?" he repeated. The soldier shut his eyes and opened them immediately. A smile spread over his broad face with the thin, dirty moustache.

"I saw some nice people coming along and thought I'd like to say how do you do to them."

"That's a lie," Teliegin said. "The other fellows egged you on to come; I heard you all laughing."

"It is true; they did egg me on," the soldier said with a laugh. He was evidently not so drunk as he had at first sight appeared.

"It's so dull, Your Honour. You keep on nibbling seeds; you swallow them with the flies and the midges and you are bored the whole day. I am sorry I disturbed you; it is pleasant to talk to decent people, but you have your own affairs; continue your walk. . . . We've been lying on our bellies since seven this morning. . . . Those big-jawed fellows said, 'Go on, Stepan, scare them.' . . ." He looked amiably at Dasha. She laughed and took Ivan Ilyitch's cigarette-case out of his pocket and offered it to the man. He took a cigarette and put it behind his ear. "It's a stern husband you've got . . . I am sorry I troubled you . . . I wish you a pleasant walk."

After the encounter Ivan Ilyitch walked along frowning. He listened absently to Dasha's words. At last he slapped his thigh in annoyance. "Three months ago that fellow would have been shot for a trick like that; he knows that well. What made him come up to me, do you think? It was to spit on my shoulder-

straps. What matters it to him what price I paid to get them? I am an officer and consequently an enemy."

"He did not hurt us, Ivan."

"Let him but have tried to hurt you! He wouldn't have dared!"

"I don't think it was that," Dasha said, "but when he came up and saw us . . ."

"Saw us, indeed! You don't know the kind of men they are. They are terrible."

"Why do you hate them so?"

"I hate"—Ivan Ilyitch stopped. "I don't hate them. I know them well. Every soldier, whether he come from the peasants or the workers, has a charge of dynamite in him—hatred. It doesn't mean that he hates you, not a bit of it. He is kind and civil and obliging. If you were to get ill, he would take the greatest possible care of you, and, and there wouldn't be any pretence about it either. It would be done from the heart. They are a sterling, lovable people. I knew of orderlies who pulled out their officers from under the deadliest fire. Their dynamite is contained in a kind of capsule. If it bursts, the soldier is no longer like a man, he is a wild beast. You say I hate them. I fear them. The whole of the front is in their hands and the fate of the country. What is the front to them? What is Russia to them? To be spat upon like these shoulder-straps. There now, take that for everything!" . . .

"You are not altogether just," Dasha said tentatively. "If they hate us, we must have been to blame somewhere. . . . Don't argue, now." . . . Dasha took Ivan Ilyitch firmly by the arm and looked up in his face as she walked along. "Wasn't it wrong to live

the way we lived before? Katia called it spending 'sparrow' nights. Have you ever seen a 'sparrow' night? It is a dark, dark night, hot and still and starry and heat-lightning is playing silently about the sky. That is how we lived. We played about senselessly. . . . Do you know, Ivan . . ."

Dasha suddenly blushed and turned away. They had come out on to the road, along which stretched the palace railings with golden spikes, dull with age. Dasha felt a stone in her shoe and stopped. Ivan Ilyitch sat down and took Dasha's shoe from her warm foot in a white stocking and kissed it below the instep near the toes. Dasha rested her foot against her knee, put on her shoe and said, "I want to have a child by you." . . .

She had at last spoken the words which she had been wanting to say during the whole of their walk. She turned hot and fanned her face with her hand. She looked through the railings, where on a lawn, two men were digging a long black bed in the soft green grass. One of them was an old man in a neat white apron. He placed his foot on the spade leisurely and giving it a push with bent knee, he threw up the purple earth. The other was a man in an army shirt, gathered at the back. He wore a broad-brimmed cap with the peak pulled over his eyes. He was working hurriedly, evidently not used to it. He bent down and took out a handkerchief from the pocket of his breeches tucked into his boots and drove away the flies that were sticking to his face.

"Look now, he doesn't mind it!" a sneering voice said. Teliegin turned and saw standing beside him a blinking old man in a new cap and warm waistcoat

over an embroidered shirt. The man gave a nod in the direction of the two men digging. "Transplanting cabbages from a loam bed. There's work for you, now! . . . Funny!" . . . The man laughed merrily. Dasha turned to him in astonishment. She took Ivan Ilyitch's arm and they walked away from the railings. At this moment, the man in the army shirt turned on hearing the laughter, with his foot resting on the spade. His cheeks were sunken and dark with bags under the eyes. With a gesture familiar to the whole of Russia, he passed the hollow of his left hand over his big red moustache.

The man outside the railings took off his cap and bowed to the former Emperor with a crooked smile. He shook his long hair and pulling his cap low over his eyes, went on his way, his beard in the air, treading noisily with his new boots.

XLII

Ekaterina Dmitrievna settled near Dasha in a little wooden house with a small garden belonging to two old ladies. One of them, Klavdia Ivanovna, had, at one time, been a singer, the other, Sophia Ivanovna, was a kind of attendant and friend. In the morning Klavdia Ivanovna would paint her eyebrows, put on a raven-black wig and sit down to patience. Sophia Ivanovna looked after the house and when angry would speak in a masculine voice. The house was clean and overcrowded in the old-fashioned way with numerous table-cloths and screens and faded portraits of by-gone days. In the morning the rooms smelt of good coffee, but when dinner was being cooked, Klavdia Ivanovna complained of the smell of the food and sniffed her smelling salts, while Sophia Ivanovna would call in a deep voice from the kitchen: "What can I do with the smell? You can't fry potatoes with patchouli scent!" In the evening the paraffin-oil lamps with full globes would be lighted. The old women were solicitous in their care of Katia, notwithstanding that Klavdia Ivanovna held there was something demoniacal in every young woman. Katia lived quietly in that old-world retreat untouched by time. She got up early in the morning, swept and dusted her own room and seated herself at the window to mend underclothes or darn stockings, or to alter one of her old smart dresses into one of a simpler style. (She had not bought or made anything since the Paris days

and money was very scarce now.) After breakfast Katia would go for a walk on the island, taking a book with her or some embroidery. She would go to a favourite spot and sit down on a seat near a pond and watch the children playing on a sand heap, or the carriages, sparkling in the sun, rolling by through the tree trunks. She would read and embroider and think. At six o'clock she would go to Dasha's for dinner. At eleven Dasha and Teliegin would see her home, when the sisters walked arm and arm in front, while Teliegin walked behind, whistling, "covering the rear," for it was now not altogether safe to walk at night in the street.

Every day Katia wrote to Vadim Petrovitch Roshchin, who was away at the front. With great care she honestly set down everything that had happened during the day and all that she had been thinking about. Roshchin had requested her to do this and in his replies expressed his gratitude. "When you write me, Ekaterina Dmitrievna, that you are miserable because a dress you had counted on altering was coming to pieces, or that when you crossed the Elagin Bridge it commenced to rain and you took shelter under the trees because you had no umbrella, and that while you were waiting you decided to give Daria Dmitrievna a white sunshade with cherries on it for a birthday present, it gives me great pleasure. . . . All these trifles are dear to me; I feel that I could not live without these trifles in your life." . . .

A remote corner of Katia's brain was conscious that Roshchin exaggerated; he could very well have lived without her trifles, but the idea of being alone by herself for a single day, was so alarming that Katia tried

not to question, but to believe that everything in her life was necessary and dear to Vadim Petrovitch. In consequence whatever she did assumed a special significance. "I lost my thimble and looked for it for a whole hour and then found it on my finger." Vadim Petrovitch, no doubt, would laugh at her having become so stupid.

Katia's attitude to herself was as to something that did not wholly belong to her. One day as she sat working and thinking at the window, she noticed that her fingers trembled. She raised her head and stuck her needle into her skirt on the knee and sat looking before her for a long time. Her gaze fell on a cupboard mirror and she caught sight of a frail face with large, sad eyes and hair dressed simply in a knot at the back; it was a sweet, gentle face.... "Is that really my face?" Katia thought. She went on with her sewing, but her heart beat fast. She pricked her finger and put it in her mouth and once again looked at the glass, but this time she could see herself and she was not so nice as the other person.... That evening she wrote to Vadim Petrovitch: "I was thinking of you the whole day. I miss you very much, my friend. I sit at the window and wait. Something is taking place within me, some long-forgotten girlish moods." ...

Even Dasha, who was absent and absorbed in her complex (according to her view) and unique relation to Ivan Ilyitch, could not help noticing a change in Katia and one evening, at tea, when she had been arguing the question for a long time said, "Katia must always wear plain, black dresses with deep collars. You can't see yourself," she said, striking her chest with the tips of three fingers, "but I assure you that you

look about nineteen. . . . She looks younger than I, Ivan, doesn't she?"

"Yes . . . that is, not quite, but . . ."

"Oh, you don't understand anything!" Dasha said. "Now look here, please, you are a man. There is no virtue in being young when a woman is really nineteen. . . . A woman's youthfulness does not depend on her age, it depends on quite other things; age has nothing to do with it." . . .

The small amount of money left to Katia on Nikolai Ivanovitch's death had come to an end. Teliegin advised her to sell up her old flat on the Znamenskaya, which had been standing empty since March. Anyhow, it was a sensible thing to do. Katia agreed and she and Dasha went to the flat to collect a few things she valued for old association's sake.

When she got up to the second floor and saw the familiar oak door with the brass plate bearing "N. I. Smokovnikov," she felt as if a cycle of life had been completed. The old porter, who, muffled and grumbling at being disturbed in his sleep, would come to open the door for her at midnight and turn out the light before she had time to get upstairs, unlocked the door and took off his cap. He allowed Katia and Dasha to walk in first and said to comfort them:

"You may be sure, Ekaterina Dmitrievna, that a crumb has not been lost. I kept an eye on the tenants day and night. They lost a son in France or they would have been here now. They liked the flat very much." . . .

The hall was damp and smelt as if it had not been lived in for some time; the blinds in all the rooms were drawn. Katia went into the dining-room and turned on the switch. The crystal chandelier blazed out brightly above the table covered with grey cloth, in the middle of which, just as of old, there stood a porcelain flower-basket; but the sprig of mimosa in it had long been withered. The high-backed, leather-seated chairs—indifferent spectators of by-gone gaiety—were ranged along the walls. One panel of the carved side-board as big as an organ stood open, exposing the up-turned champagne glasses. On the Venetian oval mirror, covered with dust, the golden boy slept on top, just as before, his hand stretched out to the scroll of the frame.

Katia was standing motionless by the door. "My God!" she said softly. "Do you remember, Dasha? No one here now!"

She went into the drawing-room and turned on the big chandelier. She looked around and shrugged her shoulders. The cubist and futurist pictures, which at one time had seemed so brazen and difficult to understand, now looked pitiful and faded and seemed like so much discarded clothing after a carnival.

"Do you remember, Katia?" asked Dasha, indicating the bow-legged Venus holding a flower in her yellow corner; "I used to imagine she was the cause of all our misfortunes; I had a superstitious horror of her."

Dasha laughed and began to sort out the music. Katia went into her old bedroom. It was just as it had been left three years ago, when, in her travelling dress and veil, she had run in to take her forgotten gloves from her dressing-table and had turned to look back when going out.

Now everything seemed dull and of smaller proportions than formerly. Katia opened a cupboard full of little bits of lace and silk and stuff and shoes and stockings. They had all seemed so essential at the time; a faint odour of perfume still clung about them. Aimlessly Katia began to sort them out. Some memory of the life gone by forever clung to every little thing.

The stillness of the house was suddenly broken and filled with clear, majestic sounds of music. It was Dasha playing the sonata she used to practise three years ago when preparing for her examination. Katia shut the cupboard door and went back to the drawing-room, where she sat down near her sister.

"Isn't it splendid, Katia?" Dasha said, half turning round. "Just listen to this passage. It is like a voice thundering throughout the universe: Live all of you for My sake." . . .

Dasha played a few more bars, then took up another book.

"Come, Dasha," Katia said, "my head aches."

"But how about the things?"

"I don't want anything from here; I'll only have the piano moved to my place; as for the rest, they can go." . . .

Katia had come to dinner, excited by her quick walk, happy and in a new black straw hat and blue veil. "Just in time," she said, touching Dasha's cheek with her warm lips. "I've got my feet wet though. Let me change." She took off her gloves and went

over to the window. The rain, which had been trying to come down several times that day, now poured down, whirled about by the wind and streaming down the gutters. Far down below umbrellas hurried past. The dark air outside the window flashed with a white light and immediately there was a thunder-clap that made Dasha cross herself.

"Do you know who is coming to see us this evening?" Katia asked, her lips puckering into a smile.

"Who?" said Dasha, but that moment there was a ring in the hall and Dasha rushed out to open the door. Ivan Ilyitch's jolly laugh was heard in the hall and his feet scraping on the mat, then he and Dasha went into the bedroom, talking and laughing the while. Katia took off her gloves and hat; she took a comb from the back of her head and tidied her hair, while a gentle, enigmatical smile played about her lips.

At dinner, Ivan Ilyitch, rosy-cheeked and happy, changed into dry clothes, related the happenings of the day. At the Obukhovsky works, as in all other works and factories, the workers had gone mad. They first declared that they would work eight hours, then seven, then six. The soviets invariably supported these demands. Private enterprises were beginning to close down and the government factories were working at a loss. Profits, however, were not to be thought of now with the war and revolution. There had been another meeting at the works that day at which the Bolshevists had spoken and one and all had echoed in chorus, no compromise with the bourgeois government, no agreement with the employers; all power to the soviets who will introduce order. . . .

"I got up to speak, but it was no use; they pulled me off the platform." Ivan Ilyitch snapped off the

stalk of a radish, dipped it in salt and crunched it between his teeth. "It's a problem, I can tell you. 'Comrades,' I said to them, 'if you turn everything upside down, the factories will close down because they can't work at a loss whether they belong to you or to the employers. The government in that case will have to feed the unemployed. As you want to be in the government—in the soviets—you will have to feed yourselves, and if you do not produce anything, you will have to obtain money and bread from outside, that is, from the peasants. As you cannot give the peasants anything for their money or their bread, you will have to take it from them by force, which means war. But there are fifteen times the number of peasants that there are of you and they will have bread and you none. . . . It will end by the peasants conquering you and they will take the machinery from the factories and sell it and you will have to go begging for a bit of work in Christ's name, but there won't be any one to give it to you.' . . . I painted them such a picture, Dasha, that I was amused at it myself. You should have heard the row they kicked up! 'Hireling!' shouted the Bolshevists. 'Comrades, don't be influenced by his provocation. Millions of workers the world over are anxiously waiting your triumph over the hateful system. . . . Capitalism must be wiped off the face of the earth.' . . . I can't blame our workers, Dasha, when men are shouting at them, 'Down with individual interest! down with reason! down with slave work! your country is the universe, your aim, the conquest of happiness for all workers; you are not men of the Obukhovsky works, you are the vanguard of the world revolution.' . . . Vaska Rublev's eyes were glinting like a beast's. . . . They

wouldn't let me finish; Vaska pulled me off the platform. . . . 'I know you are not an enemy,' he said to me, 'then why do you talk like that? You had better hold your peace; we can manage without you.' . . . When we were all going out afterwards, I said to him: 'You are a clever fellow, Vaska. How is it you don't see that the Bolshevists don't care a hang for you? All they want is to climb to power on your neck!' 'And I can see, Comrade Teliegin,' he replied, 'the whole of the land and the factories belonging to the workers by the New Year. There won't be a single bourgeois left in our republic; we won't let them breed. . . . And there won't be any money. . . . People will work and live, everything will be theirs. . . . I was promised that that is what will happen by the New Year!' " . . .

Ivan Ilyitch would have laughed, but he shook his head and began to scrape together the crumbs on the table-cloth with his fingers. Dasha smothered a sigh. Katia said after a pause:

"I am certain we have great trials in front of us."

"Yes," Ivan Ilyitch said, "and the war is not over, that is the worst of it. Everything is going to pieces. There is no backbone. The workers think that the soviets are the backbone.". . .

Dasha brought the coffee in a china coffee-pot and poured a cup out for her husband first. She then took a brush and scoop and went round the table to sweep off the crumbs. When she got to Ivan Ilyitch she put down the brush and scoop quickly and pressed close to her husband with her face on his breast.

"There, there, Dasha, don't be alarmed," Ivan Ilyitch said, patting her hair. "Nothing terrible has happened yet; we have been in tighter corners. . . . Now

listen to this: I remember when we came to Rotten Lime . . ."

He began to relate some of his army hardships. Katia looked at the clock on the wall and went out of the dining-room. Dasha looked at her husband's strong face with the gleaming teeth and laughing eyes and felt reassured somewhat; she had nothing to fear with a man like him. When she had heard the story of Rotten Lime, she wiped her eyes with her table-napkin and went into her bedroom to powder her face. She found Katia sitting by the dressing-table mirror doing something to her face.

"Dasha," she said in a thin voice, "you haven't any more of that scent left; you know, the warm kind."

Dasha sat down opposite her sister and stared at her in the greatest astonishment.

"Katia, are you 'cleaning your wings'?"

Katia blushed and threw back her head with a smile.

"What is the matter with you today, Katia?"

"I have been trying to tell you, but you wouldn't listen to me," she said. "Vadim Petrovitch is arriving this evening by an army train and he is coming to us straight from the station. . . . I couldn't ask him to my place, it's too late." . . .

At half past nine there was a ring and Katia, Dasha and Teliegin rushed out into the hall. Teliegin opened the door and Roshchin came in. He was in a crumpled coat thrown over his shoulders and a cap drawn low over his face. His haggard, solemn, sun-burnt face

softened into a smile when he saw Katia. She was looking at him, confused and happy. When he had thrown his coat and cap on a chair and greeted them, saying, "I am sorry to have dropped on you so late, but I wanted to see you tonight, Ekaterina Dmitrievna, and you, Daria Dmitrievna," Katia's eyes lighted up.

"I am glad you have come, Vadim Petrovitch," she said, and when he bent over her hand, she kissed him on the temple, her lips quivering with a smile.

"It's a pity you didn't bring your things," said Ivan Ilyitch, "because we'll make you stay the night just the same." . . .

"We can put him in the drawing-room on the Turkish divan and if it's too short, he can put a chair against it," Dasha said. "Of course, he must stay with us, mustn't he, Ivan?"

As in a dream Roshchin listened to what these kind, elegant people were saying to him. He was all on edge after the sleepless night of his journey, hanging out of carriage windows for food, struggling perpetually for the few inches of space in the carriage, with coarse oaths ringing in his ears. It was still strange to him to see the three of them, incredibly beautiful and clean and perfumed, standing on the sparkling parquet floor in the brilliantly lighted hall, pleased that he, Roshchin, had come. As in a dream he could see Katia's beautiful grey eyes saying, I am glad, glad, glad. . . . He pulled his belt straight, stood erect and gave a deep sigh.

"Thank you," he said. "Where am I to go?"

They led him into the dining-room and gave him some food. Without noticing what it was, he ate everything that was put before him; he was soon satis-

fied and pushed away his plate. He lighted a cigarette. His thin, grave, clean-shaven face, which had alarmed Katia when she had first seen it in the hall, was now softened and looked more tired. His big hands, with the light of the orange shade falling on them, trembled as he lighted a match. Katia was sitting in the shadow of the lamp-shade, watching Vadim Petrovitch eagerly. She felt that she loved every little hair on his hands, every button on his dark brown leather tunic, crumpled from lying in his suit-case. She noticed, too, that he clenched his jaws as he talked and spoke through his teeth. His sentences were short and muddled. He evidently felt this himself and tried to control some anger that had been raging in him for a long time. . . . Dasha exchanged glances with her sister and her husband and suggested to Roshchin that if he were tired, he might perhaps like to go to bed.

He sat straight up in his chair and burst out unexpectedly: "Really, I did not come back for the purpose of going to sleep. . . . Oh, no." . . .

He went out on the balcony and stood under the fine rain. Dasha gave a motion of the eyes towards the balcony and shook her head. Roshchin said from the balcony:

"I am sorry, Daria Dmitrievna. . . . This is the result of four nights of lost sleep." . . .

He came back, smoothing his hair on the top of his head and sat down in his place.

"I have come straight from the staff," he said, "and am bringing very uncomfortable news to the War Minister. . . . When I first saw you all a mortal pain came over me. . . . I must tell you everything. There

is no one dearer to me in the world than you are, Ekaterina Dmitrievna." Katia turned pale. Ivan Ilyitch put his hands behind his back and Dasha, from her place by the wall, looked at Roshchin with eyes full of horror. "If a miracle does not happen," he said with a cough, "we are lost. The army does not exist any more. . . . The front is in flight. . . . The soldiers are fleeing on the roofs of the trains. It is beyond human power to stay the disintegration on the front. . . . It is like trying to stay the ebb of the ocean. You can control the fear of death in a soldier—I have myself turned back half a company to the attack with nothing more than a stick, but now the Russian soldier has lost the sense of what he is fighting for. He has lost respect for the war, respect for everything connected wtih the war, the government, the country, Russia. . . . The soldier is convinced that we have only to cry 'Peace' and the war will stop the same day. . . . And it is only we who won't make peace. You see, the soldier despises the place where he has been deceived for three years. He has thrown down his rifle and you can't make him fight any more. . . . When the whole ten millions of them rush away in the autumn . . ."

"But we can't stop the war! We can't open the front with a hundred and seventy-five German divisions there!" said Ivan Ilyitch, restraining a tremor in his voice. A cold obstinacy appeared in his bright eyes, an expression Dasha knew so well and which always alarmed her so. "I can't understand the way you talk, Vadim Petrovitch." . . .

"I am bringing a plan to the War Minister, but I have no hope that it will be approved," Roshchin said. "This is the plan: we must declare a complete

demobilization at the earliest possible moment; that is, we must organize the flight. By that means we can save the railways, the artillery and stores of shells and provisions. We must tell the allies definitely that we are not going out of the war. At the same time, in the Volga basin, we must put a defence force of trusted units which can still be found. Along the Volga we must commence the formation of a new army, the mainstay of which must be voluntary units. We must support and form partisan detachments. . . . Depending on the factories in the Urals and coal and corn from Siberia, we must begin the war afresh. . . . There is no other issue. We must understand the nature of the times. The Russian people have no more reason or will; they are acting from the darkest recesses of their aroused instinct of a man of the soil. That instinct is to plough and to sow. Russia will be a state of ploughmen. . . . The land will be ploughed beautifully. . . . Let them begin it as soon as may be——"

"Open the front to the enemy? Give up our country to the savage hordes? No, Vadim Petrovitch; a good many people will not agree to that!"

"We have no country now," said Roshchin. "There was a place which used to be our country"—he clenched his fists on the table so violently that the fingers turned blue—"but Great Russia ceased to exist the moment the people laid down their arms. You may not want to realize it but there it is. . . . Can St. Nicholas help you? People have forgotten to pray to him. Great Russia is now manure beneath the plough. . . . We must begin everything afresh, the formation of troops, the state; we must squeeze a different soul

into ourselves. The Russian people are no more; there are inhabitants, folks like me." . . .

He struck his breast, dropped his head into his hands on the table and burst into smothered sobs.

Katia did not go home that night. She and Dasha slept in the same bed, while Ivan Ilyitch had a bed hastily improvised in the study. After the painful scene Roshchin had gone out on the balcony, where he got soaked, and coming back into the dining-room, asked to be excused. The most sensible thing to do was to go to bed. He had barely time to undress when he fell asleep. When Ivan Ilyitch went in on tiptoe to turn out his light, Roshchin was sleeping on his back, his big hands clasped on his chest. His thin face with the eyes tightly shut and the wrinkles, which showed sharply in the morning light, were like those of a man who was controlling pain. Ivan Ilyitch bent over him and made the isgn of the cross. Roshchin did not wake; he sighed and turned over on his right side.

Katia and Dasha, lying under one blanket, talked for a long time in whispers. Dasha listened from time to time; Ivan Ilyitch was not able to settle down in the study. "He is still up," Dasha said, "and he must go to the works at seven." She put her feet out of bed and felt about for her slippers. She did not find them, however, and went in barefoot to her husband.

Ivan Ilyitch, in his trousers and braces, was sitting on the bed made for him on the couch, reading a big book, which he held in both hands on his knees.

"Aren't you asleep?" he asked Dasha, looking up with shining eyes that saw nothing. "Sit down. I have made a discovery. Listen . . ." He turned back a page and began to read softly:

"'Three hundred years ago the wind marched unhindered through the woods and the plains of the steppes, cross the big graveyard known as the Russian land. There were burnt walls of towns, ashes in place of population, crosses and bones on the grass-grown roads, flocks of crows and the howl of the wolf at night. Here and there, along the forest tracks, robber bands wandered. They had long squandered on drink the boyar coats, stolen ten years back, and the costly vessels and pearl ornaments of the ikons. Everything in Russia had been pillaged and cleared. Robbers and Cossacks in tattered garments, were hunting for their last prey. . . .

"'Russia was ravaged and depeopled. Even the Crimean Tartars no longer descended to the wild steppes, for there was nothing more to plunder. For the ten years of the Great Insurrection, imposters, thieves, Cossacks and Polish raiders went with sword and fire from end to end of the Russian land. There was a terrible famine. People ate horse manure and pickled human flesh. Black plague was rampant. The remnants of the population wandered along the Lithuanian borders to the White Sea, along the Urals to Stroganov, to Siberia.

"'In those bad times, to the walls of Moscow, laid waste and desolate, cleared with difficulty of thieves —to that big ash-heap, a sledge was brought along the dirty March road, containing the frightened boy Michael Romanov. On the advice of the Patriarch,

he had been elected Tsar of Muscovy by the impoverished boyars, tradeless merchant guests and grave peasants from the north and the Volga. The new Tsar could only weep and pray. And he wept and prayed, in terror and misery looking out of the carriage window at the tattered, wild crowds of Russians, who had come out of the Moscow gates to meet him. The Russian people had no great faith in the new Tsar, but they had to live. And somehow or other, they began to live. They borrowed money from Stroganov merchants. The townspeople began to build and the peasants to till the waste land. They sent out trusted people, mounted and on foot, to attack the robbers on the highways. They lived poorly and strictly. They bowed low to the Crimea, Lithuania and Sweden. They defended the faith. They knew it was their one power; though thievish at times, they were a strong, alert, easy-going people. They hoped to live through it and they lived through it. Once more the waste places, overgrown with tall grass, became peopled.'" . . .

Ivan Ilyitch closed the book with a bang.

"You see what it was like. . . . We won't perish now. . . . Great Russia lost! The grandchildren of those ragged peasants, who with their staffs set out to rescue Moscow, defeated Karl XII., drove the Tartars beyond Perekop, captured Lithuania and on their rafts began to haunt the shores of the Pacific Ocean. . . . And the grandchild of the boy who was brought to Moscow in a sleigh, built Petersburg. . . . Great Russia lost! If only a district is left after us, Russia will grow from that." . . .

He gave a snort and looked out of the window at the grey, morning light. Dasha hid her head on his shoulder; he stroked it and kissed her hair.

"Go to bed, you little coward." . . .

Dasha laughed, bid him good night and went away, but turned in the doorway.

"Ivan, isn't Katia fond of him!"

"He's a splendid fellow." . . .

Dasha went out. Ivan Ilyitch turned over the pages of the book, put it down and lighted a cigarette. He leaned against the leather back of the sofa, thinking. The whole of that evening he had been worried by a feeling of his own blameworthiness. Now that every one in the house was asleep, he saw pitilessly what had been tormenting him. "I am happy and in order to go on living in this happiness, I shut my eyes and ears to what is going on around me. I deceive myself and deceive Dasha. I am angry when I am told that Russia is perishing and I do nothing to prevent her perishing. I must either live dishonestly, or . . ."

The issue of the "or" was so unexpected and Ivan Ilyitch was so little prepared for it that after a time he thought it better to postpone issues and resolutions to the morrow. He pulled down the window-blind and went to bed.

The evening was still and hot. The air smelt of petrol fumes and tar from the wooden paving blocks. Windows were brilliantly lighted. Along the Nevsky, amid the petrol fumes and tobacco smoke and the dust raised by people's feet, a disorderly, motley crowd moved. Puffing and groaning, government cars went by waving flags. Shrill voices of newspaper boys were calling out the startling news, which no one believed. Hawkers of cigarettes and matches and

stolen goods pushed among the crowd. In the squares of Katerine and Nicholas, on the grass plots, by the bushes, soldiers loafed around, nibbling seeds and exchanging jokes with well-fed street girls.

Katia was coming from the Nevsky. Vadim Petrovitch had arranged to meet her at seven o'clock on the quay. Katia turned down the Palace Square. The big windows on the second floor of the blood-red, sombre palace were lighted up. Motor-cars stood at the main entrance and soldiers and chauffeurs strolled about, exchanging jokes. Puffing, a motor-bicycle dashed up, bringing a courier, a pale, angry boy in a motor cap, a shirt blown out by the wind and in puttees. On a corner balcony of the palace, some grey-haired man in a jacket was leaning on his elbows, sad and motionless. Skirting the palace, Katia turned. Above the arch of the General Staff, just as of old, the four bronze horses of a chariot were flying to meet the sunset. Katia crossed the embankment and sat down near the water on a stone, semi-circular seat. The transparent blue outlines of bridges were suspended above the gently flowing river. In the golden dust there shone the outstretched sword of the Peter Paul Cathedral. A wretched little boat moved over the reflections on the water. To the left, beyond the roofs and the smoke, the huge disc of the dying sun sank in the orange glow.

Folding her hands on her knees, Katia gazed at the dying sun, patiently waiting for Vadim Petrovitch. He came up unobserved and leaning on the stone, he looked down at Katia from above. She could feel his presence and turned with a smile. She stood up. He was gazing at her with a strange, astonished look.

She went up the stairs to the embankment and took his arm. They walked on.

"Well?" Katia asked softly.

"Well? . . . I was coming along and saw an angel from heaven sitting on a seat."

Katia gently squeezed his arm. She asked him how he had got on with his affairs that day. He told her, but there was little comfort in what he said. They crossed Trinity Bridge and at the top of Kamennoostrovsky Roshchin stopped and gave a nod in the direction of a private house, decorated with Dutch tiles, which stood at the bottom of a garden enclosed by railings. The broad windows and the glass walls of the conservatory were brilliantly illuminated. A few motor-bicycles stood at the entrance.

"There's that scorpions' nest," Roshchin said. "All right . . ."

It was the private residence of a famous dancer, where, having evicted the owner, the central committee of one of the parties fighting for power, popularly called the Bolsheviks, had quartered themselves. Typewriters clicked throughout the night and in the morning, when some rough, ragged individuals gathered before the house and some gaping passers-by, the head of the party came out on the balcony and began to speak to the crowd. He told them it was essential to overthrow the Provisional Government immediately, to give all power to the soviets, to make peace with the Germans, to abolish capital punishment, private property, money and enforced labour. All this he promised to accomplish through the medium of his party.

"Next week we are going to liquidate this nest," Roshchin said. They walked on leisurely down the

Kamennoostrovsky. A stooping man passed them. He was in a ragged coat, an old hat with low-hanging brim; he carried a pail in one hand and a bundle of papers in the other.

"I don't know if I have a right to. . . . But it doesn't matter, however," said Roshchin, "the main thing is . . . you." Katia looked up at him with raised eyebrows. "I can't leave you, Ekaterina Dmitrievna." She immediately dropped her eyes. "We can't part at a time like this."

"I dared not say that to you," Katia replied softly. "How can we part, my friend?"

They came to the place where the man with the pail had just posted a small white poster on the wall and as they were both excited, they stopped for a moment. They read by the light of the street-lamp, "To all! To all! To all! Long live the Third International! Comrades, the Revolution is in danger!" . . .

"Ekaterina Dmitrievna," said Roshchin, taking her thin hand in his own as they walked slowly along the broad, now deserted street, at the end of which the evening glow had not yet died down, "the years will pass, the war will stop, the revolution will cease to rage and your gentle, loving heart alone will remain uncorrupt." . . .

The light streamed from the open windows of the big houses; sounds of music were borne, gay, careless voices and laughter and talk. . . . The stooping man with the pail crossed the street and again appeared before Katia and Roshchin. He put up a poster on the stone wall and turned. In the shadow of his hat, drawn over his eyes, Katia could see a gaping hollow of a nose and a black tufted beard.

THE END